

79/80

ROBBING THE POOR—AND IT'S EASY

THE MANAGER unkindly castigated one part of the Town's performance at The Valley on Friday as "rubbish." They had roared into a two-goal lead in the first 12 minutes, then taken it easy until half-time as it became clear that relegation-doomed Charlton had almost nothing to offer in any department.

A few words of wisdom at half-time apparently rectified matters as the Town chalked up their biggest away win since Harry Haslam's days, when they won 4-1 at Cardiff in October 1977.

Charlton's newly appointed manager Mike Bailey stated the obvious when he talked about a lack of confidence among his players, and for him a spellbinding killer goal by Alan West was a double blow—Bailey had worked as assistant coach with Minnesota Kicks to see West's abilities at first hand.

Even when they were at half-pace the Town looked a class above Charlton, and well worth their first away win since Boxing Day.

David Moss returned, and celebrated with his 23rd goal of the season, his ninth penalty in the eighth minute. He started the move with a square pass in midfield to Tony Grealish and as Brian Stein's

trickery put the Charlton goal under threat Lawrie Madden brought him down. "Mossie is back", chanted the delighted Town following as the penalty went unerringly into the usual spot, past Nicky Johns's right hand.

Grealish, Ricky Hill and West were tearing great holes through Charlton's four-man defensive formation and the second goal took only another four minutes to arrive.

It started with Paul Price making a clearance. Bob Hatton won the ball, and went on a run down the right wing, leaving Tony Hazell stranded. Stein's header from the centre was beaten out by Johns, Grealish tried a shot from the rebound which was blocked, and as the ball went loose towards the flank Moss flicked it back into the centre and Grealish darted in to head his first league goal as a Town player—his tally at Orient was ten in 169 matches.

It was, as Mr Pleat observed later, a little bit of Robin Hood, except that here the Town were robbing the poor to try to get rich.

Yet the pace and control slipped

for a time. Jake Findlay had to make a hurried save to keep out a far post header from Derek Hales, and an unlucky offside robbed Martin Robinson in the 24th minute when he netted from a low cross by Hales.

A Charlton goal at that stage might have transformed the match, and forced the Town to open up again, but in the event the Londoners' attacking carried little real threat even when they had an equal share of the play.

They must have hoped for an early break in the second half, but instead West lashed in a goal to remember in the 48th minute. A headed clearance dropped to him about ten yards outside the penalty area. West let the ball bounce once, then hammered a shot on the volley into the net. I haven't seen a goal hit with such force since the days of Malcolm Macdonald or Bert Mitchell, and it was the end for Charlton.

West hit a similar one in the 84th minute, but this time a defender got in the way, leaving Hatton the chance to make it 4-0, and although Hales got a consolation for Charlton a minute later the Town's supremacy was never in doubt.

Charlton details

CHARLTON ATH 1, LUTON TOWN 4

Half-time: 0-2

TOWN: Findlay; Stephens, Donaghy, Saxby, Price; Grealish, Hill, West; Stein, Hatton, Moss. Sub: Aizlewood, not used.

CHARLTON: Johns; Shaw, Madden, Hazell, Berry; Tydeman, Powell, Gritt, Walker; Hales, Robinson. Sub: Smith, not used.

THE GOALS: David Moss, penalty, eight minutes, after Madden tripped Brian Stein; Tony Grealish, his first for the Town, 12 minutes, header from Moss's flick; Alan West, super-goal, 48 minutes, right foot volley from almost 30 yards; Bob Hatton, 84 minutes, from rebound after another West special had been blocked; Derek Hales for Charlton, 85 minutes.

OTHER GOAL ATTEMPTS: Town seven saved, six wide; Charlton five saved, six off target, one disallowed for offside.

ATTENDANCE: 8,971—well above Charlton's average, thanks to a big following from Luton.

REFEREE: Colin Downey, Middlesex—produced a very good performance.

ENTERTAINMENT: Apart from a first-half flat patch, when the Town were strolling through the game, it was lovely for Luton eyes to watch. Charlton didn't look Third Division . . . more like Fourth.

BOOKINGS: Mal Donaghy for dissent; Derek Hales for a foul on Paul Price.