

Lil's cup is full of happiness

LUTON TOWN 3, CHARLTON ATHLETIC 0

MAKING his first appearance since collecting his Second Division championship medal in the final league game of last season, Lil Fuccillo hammered two goals at Kenilworth Road on Tuesday night to put the Town within easy reach of the third round of the Milk Cup.

His goals saved the Town's blushes against a hard-running Second Division side who could have upset the formbook if they possessed a man with similar finishing power.

David Pleat and Charlton manager Ken Craggs were both at pains to say that with the second leg of the tie still to be played at The Valley in three weeks' time, the game is not yet over.

The odd thing on Tuesday night was that although the Town had more possession, and did a lot more attacking than their opponents, Charlton ought to have been two up before the Town scored.

Steve White and Derek Hales, back on the ground where they both scored some memorable goals, missed easy chances when the Town's back four was caught square by direct long passes.

Hales was barely six yards from goal when he shot wide with only Jake Findlay ahead of him, and White beat Kirk Stephens for pace for a similar chance and put the ball wide.

Charlton used Billy Lansdowne as a sweeper and packed their defence well. The contest was between a side trying to play their way through towards goal and a visiting combination prepared to defend in depth, draw opponents forward and then try to get into space in attacking positions at high speed.

Better finishing would have given Charlton the edge, but they were on their way out of the cup when Lansdowne tripped Brian Stein in the 23rd minute. Stein took the penalty to score his ninth goal of the season.

Carl Harris wasted another good chance before Fuccillo volleyed the second goal, in the 44th minute, after a shot by Ricky Hill had been blocked.

The Town piled on the pressure after the break, without looking at their peak, and goalkeeper Nicky Johns rescued Charlton with marvellous saves from Kirk Stephens and David Moss before Fuccillo scored the goal that might be vital. He took a pass from Stephens on his chest, and hammered the ball into the net five minutes from time.

DETAILS

TOWN: Findlay; Stephens, Goodyear, Donaghy, Money; Hill, Horton, Fuccillo; Stein, Walsh, Moss. Sub: Kellock, not needed.

CHARLTON: Johns; Curtis, Elliott, Berry, Lansdowne; Walker, Bullivant, Mehmet, Harris; White, Hales (Gritt, 82 mins).

THE GOALS: Brian Stein, penalty, 23 mins; Lil Fuccillo twice, 44 and 85 mins.

OTHER STRIKES: Town ten saved and nine wide; Charlton three saved and ten wide. Corners: 11-2 to the Town.

ATTENDANCE: 7,030, lowest of the season.

REFEREE: Alan Robinson, Hants.

ENTERTAINMENT: Patchy, but a good second half from the Town, and Fuccillo's goals were both crackers.