

Verdict on the Town's week ★ ★

SPORTS NEWS 1

Ten men look better than 11

CHARLTON ATHLETIC 2, LUTON TOWN 0
(Aggregate 2-3)

ROCKED by Charlton's two-goal fight-back in the Milk Cup at The Valley on Tuesday night, and down to ten men for the last 39 minutes after Jake Findlay was sent off, the final whistle sounded none too soon for the Town.

A lacklustre performance for the first hour almost threw away the three-goal lead built up at Kenilworth Road three weeks ago.

It was a rip-roaring cup-tie, full of excitement and incident, with Charlton risking everything on attack and so very nearly getting reward of at least extra time.

They were still waiting for the completion of the transfer of Allan Simonsen but Derek Hales, the man likely to step down to make way for the Danish international, responded to the challenge with a vigorous and athletic assault on the Town's defence.

Findlay returned in goal after an injury, Mitchell Thomas was given his debut at right back in place of Kirk Stephens, and Wayne Turner replaced Lil Fucillo in midfield.

But disaster struck before they could settle down, with Hales netting in the third minute after Paul Curtis had got round the back of the Town's defence, down Charlton's right.

The Londoners, urged on by a crowd that sensed a shock result was possible, had the Town reeling under consistent pressure.

Physical power and spirit unsettled the Town, and a referee's mistake four minutes into the second half put Charlton within one goal of a draw. Carl Harris took the ball into the penalty area and tripped up, a yard away from Mal Donaghy.

Referee Les Shapter, to Charlton's delight and surprise, thought it was a trip, gave the penalty, and Hales scored his second from the spot.

Sheer willpower threatened to carry Charlton through against a Town side that never got going, but the turning point came in the 51st minute.

Findlay ran out of his area to meet a long clearance from the Charlton goalkeeper. He intended to head clear, but misjudged the bounce and caught the ball high above his head.

If he hadn't, White and Hales would have been through together, facing an empty goal. And there were no complaints from the Town when Mr Shapter sent the goalkeeper off for a very professional foul.

Donaghy took over, for the second time this season, and at long last the Town responded to a challenge. The defence, with Turner moved to left back and Richard Money alongside Goodyear, tightened up and when they were beaten Donaghy produced memorable saves from White, O'Sullivan and Harris.

Charlton's fans thought they were robbed. They weren't—but it was decidedly odd the way ten men had competed better than 11 for the first 51 minutes.

TOWN: Findlay; Thomas, Goodyear, Donaghy, Money; Hill, Horton, Turner, Stein, Walsh, Moss. Sub: Kellack, not used.

CHARLTON: Johns, Curtis, Elliott, Berry, Walker, (Ferns 32 mins); Robinson, Bullivant, O'Sullivan; Harris, White, Hales.

THE GOALS: Hales, 3 mins and penalty 49 mins. Other attempts: Town eight saved, five wide; Charlton 11 saved, 11 off target, one disallowed for offside. Corners: 9-7 to Charlton.

SENT OFF: Jake Findlay, for hands outside box to cut out a through ball, 51st minute.

REFEREE: Les Shapter, Torquay—dead wrong with the penalty, dead right with the sending off.

ATTENDANCE: 5,973.

ENTERTAINMENT: Edge-of-the-seat stuff.



● FOILED: Brian Stein, extreme right, tries to get in a shot in Tuesday's cup-tie at The Valley.

Defeat at The Hawthorns

23-10-82
3530

FLC
26-10-82
3531

ONE SLIP ENOUGH TO TIP THE SCALES

THE END of Luton Town's unbeaten run in the First Division—six games since they were crushed at Aston Villa seven weeks ago—underlined the narrow margins between success and failure at the top level.

One mistake in defence was enough to give West Brom victory. But if they were lucky to be gifted the only goal of the game, they just about deserved to win, because the Town's general performance was marginally below what was required.

The midfield was a notch or two below its best, and Paul Walsh was the only Town attacker who showed genuine First Division class. Overall the best the Town could have hoped for would have been a low scoring draw.

There were narrow differences of quality between the two teams in some departments, and they were enough to tip the scales in West Brom's favour.

The most crucial were West Brom's edge in midfield, and their all-action left flank. England manager Bobby Robson must have been much less impressed by Ricky Hill than he was by Gary Owen and Derek Statham of West Brom.

In defensive play there was little to choose between the sides. Brian Stein played a little deeper than usual, but he and Walsh were up against two of the best defenders in the First Division, Martyn Bennett and Ally Robertson.

GAME OF HIS LIFE

Walsh, always quick and lively, posed the most threat, but the biggest pleasure for Town supporters came at the other end. Clive Goodyear, the boy who was injured, had the game of his life against Cyrille Regis.

Only twice in the whole 90 minutes did the England centre-forward get away from his youthful marker, once to deliver a pass which Owen wasted with a weak shot, and once to get in a late header which clipped the top of the bar.

For the rest of the game Goodyear was a model of good positioning and well-timed tackling, and I made him the Town's man of the match. Mal Donaghy, quietly anticipating possible gaps, played a crucial role in Goodyear's best performance of the season, and the other revelation was goalkeeper Alan Judge.

He was drafted in as a late replacement when Jake Findlay reported with a neck muscle strain a few hours before kick-off.

Judge had let in four in his previous appearance, at Stoke, and took the blame for two of those goals. He more than made up for it at The Hawthorns, standing alone between Ali Brown and an early goal, and then producing the save of the match in the second half, flying across goal to clutch a vicious swerving shot by Martin Jol.

It was all the more galling for the Town that the only time Judge was beaten it was by courtesy of Town defender Kirk Stephens.

There was no apparent danger when he collected a cross just inside his own penalty area and decided to pass back. Clive Whitehead, already goal-side, saw it coming and helped himself to the easiest goal he is ever likely to score.

LOOKING MORE POTENT

That was in the 24th minute, and from then on each goalkeeper was equally busy. The major difference, however, was that West Brom's build-up looked more potent than the Town's.

I felt defeat was no disgrace. West Brom went into second place as a result of their win, and a lot of teams will go to the Hawthorns and receive much bigger reverses.

Statham, trying to win back his England place, had a super game at left-back on his return to the First Division after a cartilage operation, and with Jol putting steel and bite into their left side of midfield West Brom gave the Town a thorough testing on that flank.

And while Hill, Walsh and Stein all went close to beating Godden, the bigger scares came at the other end in the last ten minutes, when the Town were caught on the break twice.

Regis clipped the top of the bar with a near-post header, and Statham cracked a tremendous drive on to the net.

West Brom manager Ron Wylie summed up my feelings at the end when he said that he realised he had seen a good side beaten. "Luton need have no doubts about this season," he said.

They never stop trying to play good football and they will finish half-way up the table. I'm very proud of what we have been able to beat them, even on the road."

West Brom details

WEST BROMWICH ALBION 1
LUTON TOWN 0
Half-time: 1-0

TOWN: Judge; Stephens, Goodyear, Donaghy, Money; Hill, Horton, Fucillo (Turner 67 mins); Stein, Walsh, Moss.

WEST BROM: Godden; Batson, Bennett, Robertson, Statham; Zondervan, Jol, Owen; Brown, Regis, Whitehead. Sub: Cross, not needed.

THE GOAL: Clive Whitehead, 24 minutes, gift from under-hit and needless back-pass by Kirk Stephens.

OTHER GOAL ATTEMPTS: Town six saved and six off target; West Brom five saved, seven wide, one clipped the top of the bar and one hit the post. Corners: 10-2 to Albion.

ATTENDANCE: 16,345, counted as a good gate by Albion. It was higher than had been attracted to The Hawthorns by Brighton, West Ham and Nottingham Forest.

REFEREE: Mark Scott, Nottingham. Once a team-mate of David Pleat's in the Nottingham Schools side and looked a very good referee.

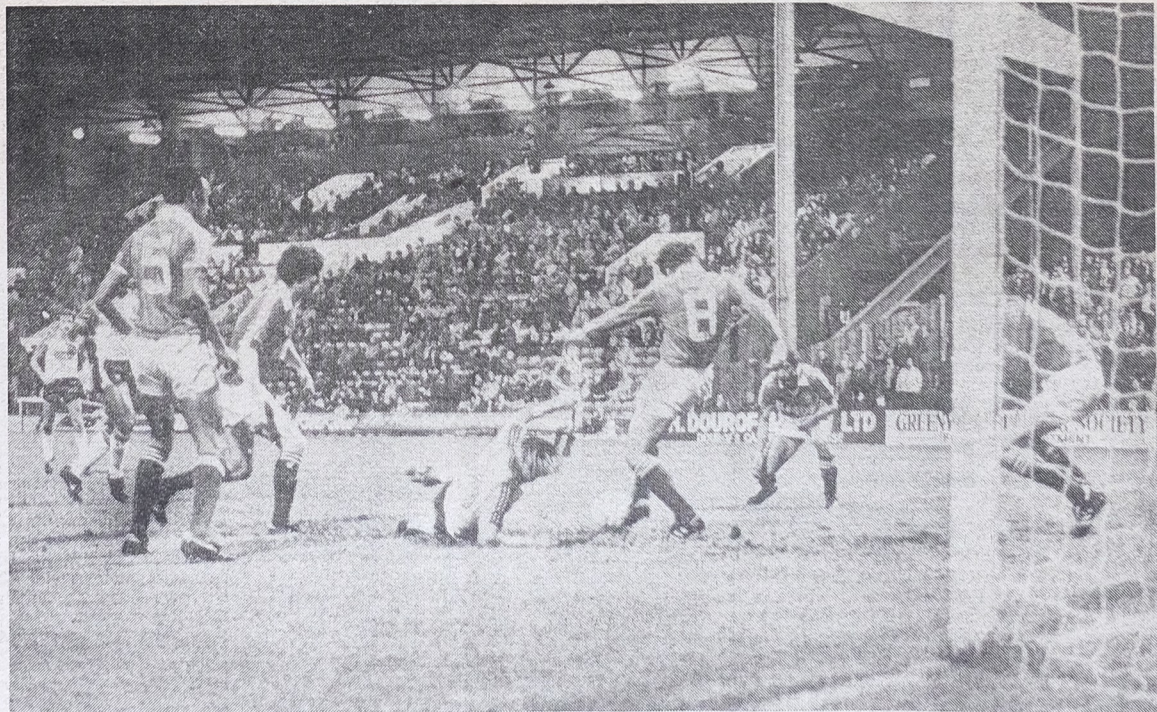
BOOKING: Richard Money for an 88th-minute trip on Ali Brown.

ENTERTAINMENT: A little short of top quality, but a very good contest, especially after the Town got over the shock of the goal.

TOWN'S LEAGUE POSITION: Thirteenth, with 14 points from 11 games, eight points behind leaders Manchester United and seven above bottom club Birmingham.

REPORTS
By BRIAN
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PICTURES
By MARK
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● BLOCKED: Wayne Turner, who was one of the Town's best players at The Valley on Tuesday night, tries to give the attack a boost, but is beaten by Terry Bullivant's clearance. Turner dropped to full-back after Jake Findlay was sent off and earned war in praise from his manager for his hard tackling and covering.