

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 Fuccillo 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: Kellock, 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.