

FRUSTRATION FOR IPSWICH

Errors so costly

IPSWICH Town were plunged further into relegation trouble after going down to fellow strugglers Luton Town at Kenilworth Road this afternoon.

It had looked good for Ipswich in the opening half hour when they led by a 19th minute goal from Eric Gates. But

By NEAL MANNING

Luton were ahead at the interval with a Mick Harford equaliser in the 13th minute and a Meka Nwajiobi goal in the 43rd minute.

Harford put the result beyond doubt in the 66th minute to leave Ipswich in a very perilous position.

Town recalled Mich D'Avray to the side, the only change from the one that drew with Newcastle a week ago. Jason Dozzell was the player to make way and the 17-year-old took the substitute's spot.

Luton were unchanged from the team that beat QPR last Saturday with midfielder Ray Daniel named as substitute.

It was a windy and overcast afternoon with the pitch on the soft side and sure to cut up.

The sale of F.A. Cup semi-final vouchers resulted in long queues around the ground before kick-off.

Apart from the opening minute when Brennan gave the ball away, but Nicholas failed to make the most of the opening, Ipswich were very much on top in the opening stages of a match that meant so much to both sides.

LUTON ... 3 IPSWICH ... 1

With the match barely two minutes old, Sealey was forced to dive to his right to save a header from Wilson after good work by Putney on the left-hand side.

Moments later Burley and Zondervan combined neatly down the right and, from the Dutchman's through ball, Wilson let go with a right foot shot from an angle and the ball went only just past the far post.

Then Wilson got in a first time shot which cleared the bar, following a cross by Gates, on the turn, when he was under pressure from Nicholas.

It was still all Ipswich and in the seventh minute Burley crossed from the right, Wilson headed on and D'Avray got in a header which Sealey had to move quickly to save at the foot of his left hand upright.

Burley and Brennan combined with two passes each in an excellent build-up and it ended with Putney letting go with a drive from just outside the penalty area but the ball went straight at Sealey.

Ipswich's pressure had not paid off in terms of a goal and in the 12th minute it was Luton who came within a whisker of going in front.

Following a corner on the right, taken by Preece, Hill flicked the ball on and Harford, coming in at the back post, headed against the bar.

Ipswich conceded a second corner on the quarter of an hour mark when Putney dived full length to head away a Thomas cross.

So impressive

Back came Ipswich and Gates was close with a 17th minute shot from just outside the Luton penalty area after he had been brought down by Donaghy.

Ipswich had certainly been impressive in the opening

period of the match and following more pressure Butcher earned a corner which led to Bobby Ferguson's side taking the lead in the 19th minute.

Brennan's flag-kick was headed out by Hill but only as far as Zondervan who squared the ball to GATES. Ipswich's leading scorer let go with a right foot shot from 20 yards and the ball flew into the top of the net for his 14th goal of the season.

There was no question that Ipswich deserved their lead and a minute later they went close to scoring a second when the lively Gates sent a free kick into the penalty area and D'Avray did well to get in a header under pressure but the ball went just over the bar.

Ipswich were almost caught on the break in the 24th minute and it took a magnificent saving tackle by Butcher to prevent an equaliser.

Nwajiobi made a break from just inside the Ipswich half and he went all the way and looked odds on scoring after rounding the advancing Cooper. But Butcher came to the rescue with a timely tackle at the expense of a corner to rob the Luton player.

Gates forced Sealey to his knees with a shot to the near post as Ipswich continued to look far the better side and on the evidence of the match so far there was a wide gap in class between the two sides although, of course, they

were both fighting to get clear of the relegation zone.

The pitch had begun to cut up quite badly but Ipswich had mastered the conditions very well with their positive approach and it was certainly something of a shock to say the least when Luton equalised in the 31st minute.

It was a result of a goalkeeping mistake by Cooper that enabled Luton to get a goal they hardly deserved on the balance of play. Harford set up the move by chesting the ball down to Stein who laid it off to Preece wide on the left hand side.

Preece's cross aimed for Harford at the far post seemed certain to be taken by Cooper as he went up and stretched out his left arm but, amazingly, the keeper missed the ball altogether which left HARFORD with a gift-wrapped chance which he accepted easily with his head.

This unexpected equaliser boosted Luton and Ipswich were forced to defend for a few minutes.

Five minutes before half-time Ipswich had a chance or regaining the lead when a good move involving Gates and Wilson ended with Putney swining his left-foot at Wilson's cross and the ball sailed high over the bar.

The action for the remaining minutes of the half took place at the Ipswich end and in the 41st minute Hill curled a lovely left foot shot against the far upright; Foster met a cross from Breacker seconds later and was not far

off target before Luton went into the lead in the 43rd minute.

Breacker played the ball in for Stein who flicked it on for NWAJIOBI to slip it past Cooper.

That was a terrible blow for Ipswich who certainly did not deserve to be behind at this stage. But Luton had looked dangerous when they got near the Ipswich goal and had certainly taken their chances. Half-time:

LUTON2
IPSWICH1

Ipswich went close to an equaliser on a couple of occasions in the first three minutes of the second-half.

In the 47th minute Burley's free-kick was headed out by Donaghy but straight to Wilson who let go with a tremendous first time left-foot volley that flew inches wide of the far post.

Then Putney cut in strongly from the left and he, too, put his foot just the wrong side of the far upright.

At the other end Cooper was forced to tip over a Foster free-kick that caught a sharp deflection off the Ipswich wall and then, in the 51st minute, Putney limped out of the action with what appeared to be a pulled hamstring and Dozzell came on to replace him.

At this stage, however, Luton were having the better of things with Ipswich unable to reproduce their good form of the first half hour.

Nicholas had to receive treatment after a late tackle by Butcher but then they produced a good move involving Brennan and Wilson but Thomas saved the day for Luton by coming across to clear for a corner as D'Avray was preparing to go for a shot.

Unlucky Gates

Gates had the ball in the Luton net in the 65th minute but the referee disallowed it

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for a foul by D'Avray on Sealey and then a minute later worse was to follow for Ipswich as Luton increased their lead.

It was all the more unfortunate for inspirational skipper Butcher as he slipped on the muddy surface as he tried to cut out a through ball from Nwajiobi when off-balance. The ball fell to HARFORD who went on and made no mistake with a clean shot into the bottom corner of the net.

Luton's third goal was a tremendous blow for Ipswich and, on the evidence of the second-half play so far, the match looked over.

Gernon booked

There was a booking for Gernon in the 69th minute for a foul on Hill, the second time the full-back has had his name taken in the third match of his return after a 13 month absence.

The Luton supporters began to chant "Going down, going down" a the Ipswich

GOALCHART

GOALCHART
GATES (Ipswich) 19.
HARFORD (Luton) 31.
NWAJIOBI (Luton) 43.
HARFORD (Luton) 66.

players and if matters don't improve quickly it will be Second Division football at Portman Road next season.

Osman had blood trickling down the side of his face from a cut on the side of his head but carried on without treatment but as the match drew into its final stages it looked more likely that Luton would score again rather than Ipswich pulling a goal back.

In the 78th minute Luton sent on substitute Daniel, another coloured player, in place of Nwajiobi and only a fine save by Cooper a minute later at the feet of Stein after Harford had outjumped Butcher and headed the ball down prevented Ipswich from going further behind.

Ipswich, who had been out-fought in midfield in the second-half, might have conceded another goal in the 81st minute. Substitute Daniel broke down the left with Ipswich claiming he was offside and Cooper had to race from his line to block Daniel's initial shot.

The ball came back to the substitute who tried to chip

the ball goalwards but Butcher was back to head it clear.

With the result now beyond any doubt Donaghy missed the opportunity of scoring three minutes from time dragging his shot from Harford's pass beyond the far post.

It had been another great disappointment for Ipswich after such a bright start and now the battle for survival is well and truly on. Result.

LUTON TOWN 3
IPSWICH TOWN 1

Attendance: 12,640