

"BLACK FRIDAY" FOR THE TOWN

Down Heavily Against Progressive Fulham

[By Chiltern]

FULHAM 4
LUTON TOWN 1

There was nothing very good about this Friday so far as the Town were concerned, and the defeat ranked with their previous heaviest this season.

They found themselves faced by a fast, confident and extremely direct combination in Fulham, who began on the right foot by scoring an early goal and seldom relaxed their grip afterwards, though had luck run the way of the Town, the result might have looked a whole lot more respectable.

Although it might well have been in view of Fulham's position in the League table, there was nothing of the desperation which characterised the match with West Bromwich, and it is worthy of note that neither trainer was called on to the field during the whole 90 minutes.

Considering the day, which would not have been out of place in mid-summer, the game was most attractive, and the well-grassed Craven Cottage pitch must have been a relief to the Town players after their experience on the bare enclosures which are the rule at this time of the season.

Fulham impressed as a thoroughly workmanlike side from the start, and the main difference between them and the Town was that they got on with the job and made ground with the minimum waste of effort, whereas the Town, particularly in attack, were inclined to be too deliberate and they kept the ball too close.

FOUND THE OPEN SPACES

Result was that Fulham found the open spaces with almost monotonous regularity, and the constant inter-changing of positions by their forwards proved a complete teaser to a Town defence that was kept at full stretch almost from the start.

Time and again, the home side worked the same trick, old but still effective, of the inside man running down the wing in a position that was just on-side,

and receiving a through pass that enabled him to make tracks for goal.

The first goal came in this fashion after nine minutes when Thomas veered out to the wing, beat Lake, and centred a low ball which went to STEVENS, who had run inside. The winger cracked it hard first-time, and it went into the net just inside the post with Duke not having an earthly chance to save.

In these early stages, the Town served up some quite good football, and Kiernan was unlucky with a shot that passed across the face of the goal, but the hardest slice of luck came when a bright move by Waugh and Watkins left Brennan with a chance.

He took it well, and aiming for the corner of the goal as Flack advanced, saw the ball pass inches wide of the upright. An equaliser at that stage would have put a different complexion on the game entirely, but against that escape, Fulham could point to two powerful shots by Rowley which missed counting only by the merest fraction.

FULHAM MORE DANGEROUS

However, throughout the first half, Fulham were the more dangerous, and it was no real surprise when ROWLEY increased their lead seven minutes from half-time.

The trouble began when Watkins lost the ball just inside the Fulham half, and in two kicks it was in the Town net. It was

pushed through to Rowley, who hit it in as Duke came out to make an unavailing attempt to save.

When the third goal arrived three minutes after the resumption, the Town's fate was completely sealed, and a very well-taken goal it was by that busy centre-forward, ROWLEY.

Again, the through pass did the trick, with Rowley beating Hall to it, and placing it just wide of Duke as the goalkeeper did the only thing possible in coming out to narrow the angle.

After that, there was never any real hope of the Town damaging Fulham's promotion chances, and they went on smoothly very much in command of the situation.

Their last goal, 10 minutes from the end, followed a free-kick for a foul on MacDonald by Gardiner. Beasley took the Town defence by surprise by pushing a short pass to MacDonald, whose centre went across the face of the goal and was met by THOMAS, who, running in from the right, headed into the net.

ONE FOR OWEN

In the last 10 minutes the Town fought back hard, and OWEN reduced their arrears with only six minutes remaining.

This, too, followed a free-kick taken by Brennan. He cannoned the ball against a crowd of players, and it went to Owen, who had taken up position, expecting something of that sort, and he gave Flack no chance with a flashing shot.

With almost the last attempt of the match, Brennan nearly scored with a shot that was deflected by a defender on to the post, and then came back into play.

However, there could be no argument about the result. Fulham were worthy winners, and even if the Town's luck was out at times, they were not impressive.

The inside forwards were too often to be found in a line, and left a gap in the middle of the field which was fatal against such a quick-thinking team as Fulham.

In addition, there was a sameness about their play which was never apparent in the home side. They switched positions bewilderingly at times, but there was a plan behind it all, whereas the Town seldom departed from the strictly orthodox, and therefore,

Fulham were nearly always a move ahead.

Watkins had a poor game and was far too often caught in possession, and Brennan, though he might easily have had two goals, did not rove about sufficiently, and made Taylor's task easy in consequence.

Had he taken a leaf from the book of the roving Rowley, he might have caused no little apprehension to a defence that was always vulnerable to the quickly staged move.

Kiernan opened in brilliant style, but gradually faded out. If he and Watkins are to be the inside-forwards, one must go back to do some foraging, and close that tell-tale gap.

When Kiernan was sparkling, Burtenshaw looked the real answer to the outside-right problem, and gave a sample of what

Comfortable Win For The Reserves

Luton Town Reserves .. 2
Watford Reserves 0

Although it was not very attractive holiday fare, the Town Reserves picked up two valuable Combination points in fairly comfortable style at Kenilworth-road yesterday.

Had their finishing been comparable to their approach work, they would have been even more decisive winners, but several easy chances went astray.

DANIEL gave them the lead after only three minutes, when he was left with only Rigg to beat, but the Town had to wait until 20 minutes from the end until they scored their second goal.

Then, it was half-back COL-LINS who did the trick from a penalty-kick when Jones handled in the area.

Watford seldom looked dangerous, but were handicapped by an injury to former Town player Bates, who received a nasty gash over the eye.

LUTON TOWN RESERVES: Streten; Mulvaney, Wilson; Collins, Gripton, Day; Nelson, Shanks, Burtenshaw (W), Daniel, O'Brien.

WATFORD RESERVES: Rigg; Harris, Jones; Eggelston, Nolan, Kelly; Bates, Young, High, Osborne, Surtees.

he can do with the right material. Quite often he beat Bacuzzi by taking the ball right up to him, and with Waugh he shared the forward honours.

The outside-left had the beating of Lewin, and was always a thorn in Fulham's side. With better support he could have been even more dangerous.

One of the key men in the Fulham side is the burly Rowley, who seemed to have discovered the secret of perpetual motion. He popped up in all sorts of unexpected places, and to my mind, Hall made the mistake of not going with him.

Instead of sticking to him fast, Hall usually remained in the middle of the field, with the result that Rowley was often a spare man, and this increased the Town's problems.

Gardiner was weak in the first half, though he improved later, and Owen was as good a defender as the Town had, with his height and headwork invaluable at times.

LAKE JUSTIFIED HIS PROMOTION

Lake probably needed this game to find his feet again after his long spell of Combination football, and he more than justified his inclusion. There were times when he was worried by the switching of the right-wing pair, but taking the game through, he was sound, and very polished in everything he did.

For Cooke there were problems, too, and he did his best to solve them in his own battling way. Often he did not go in to tackle first time, as is his want, but he tried every inch, and his tackling was wholehearted.

A debit of four goals does not look well for Duke on his first appearance in the League side for nearly two years, but he was in no way to blame, and had no chance with any of the shots that beat him.

In fact, he made a very good impression, pulled off at least three brilliant saves, and did everything according to the book. Apart from the result, it must have been a very heartening occasion for him.

FULHAM: Flack; Lewin, Bacuzzi; Quedsted, Taylor, Beasley; Stevens, Thomas (R), Rowley, Jezard, MacDonald.

LUTON TOWN: Duke; Cooke, Lake; Gardiner, Hall, Owen; Burtenshaw (C), Kiernan, Brennan, Watkins, Waugh.

Attendance: 35,250.