

WHAT THE OTHER CRITICS SAID

WOULD NOT HAVE DESERVED A POINT

But More Thrust In Attack Could Have Earned It By CHILTERN

PORTSMOUTH 3, LUTON TOWN 1

"McCann tore through and passed three Luton defenders, including Baynham before he flicked the ball into an empty net from a narrow angle. It was the kind of persistence and courage that was needed and was so lacking in Luton's effort, despite the constant probing of right-winger Harry Walden and left-half Dave Pacey.

"Luton showed form that belied their lowly position. All that was lacking was the spirit inspired into Portsmouth by George Smith who is determined to take Portsmouth back into the First Division."—"The People."

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"Luton, who have already skidded their way out of the Cup, lost this match partly because they found it harder than Portsmouth to keep their feet on a slippery surface that still had traces of peat.

"Lornie especially, was ineffective. But even Baynham, though he made one superb save from Dodson, often dropped the ball and the ponderous Kelly was frequently out of position."—"Sunday Telegraph."

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"On this showing, Luton are heading for a drop in the Third Division, and their main trouble is that they seem to have lost heart.

"In the end, it was only too hasty shooting by Portsmouth and two clearances off the line by Luton hero Brendan McNally, that prevented a bigger score."—"Sunday Pictorial."

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"Victory for Portsmouth kept alive the hopes of their more optimistic supporters who consider them a good outside bet for promotion.

"Luton's form and luck touched rock bottom in this unexciting tussle at Fratton."—"News of the World."

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"Luton slipped a little nearer the Third Division when they crashed at Portsmouth on the peat-covered Fratton Park pitch which had treacherous patches underneath. But the Luton defenders gave a tough display as they desperately tried to stave off yet another away defeat. Luton have won only one away game this season.

"Players found it hard to turn on the surface but credit Luton for not allowing the livelier Portsmouth attack to gain the upper hand completely."—"Sunday Express."

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"Ron Baynham rates an A-plus in any goalkeepers' exam; several clubs would give their supporters' club pool for back Brendan McNally and John Bramwell. Harry Walden is one of the smartest right wingers I have seen this season, and Gordon Turner showed his old goal-hunger with a 26th minute long-shot from Walden's pass.

"But after a sprightly first half, Luton seemed to remember their League position; they looked as though they could not trust the ball or each other.

"Manager Bill Harvey said: 'It's the way things have been going all season. Hope? There's always hope.' Unhappy Luton can still stop the drop if they add faith in their Soccer ability to that hope. They can't expect charity, especially from promotion-bent teams like Pompey."—"Daily Express."

WHILE it must be conceded that they would not have deserved a point, there is no doubt that the Town had every chance of snatching one at Fratton Park, Portsmouth, on Saturday, if only their forwards had measured up to standard.

As it was, only Walden, who was always dangerous despite having slightly strained his right knee during the first half, was the only member of the Town front line to cause Pompey any consistent anxiety.

In theory, the Town were right to try to find Walden at every opportunity, but this had the effect of rather exaggerating the cross-field trend that has been noticeable in their play for much of this season.

Movement of the ball across the field, while it has its merits in that it looks attractive, is not the best method calculated to pull a defence out of position, and that is where the Town fell down basically in this match.

Only rarely did a member of their attack manage to find the open space, because either an opponent was not drawn, or a pass was inaccurate, and the result was that attack after attack broke down before the penalty area was reached.

Yet, the slippery conditions cried out for the ball to be pushed past the defenders, who found it impossible to turn quickly.

Portsmouth appreciated that fact, repeatedly hit the ball down the middle and would have had more goals had their finishing been more reliable.

Clear of snow and ice, the pitch still had skating rink qualities which caused deep thinking among the Town players about the most suitable footwear for the occasion.

In fact, five of them went off the field to change after experiencing the tricky surface for only a few seconds in the pre-match kick about.

Early play suggested that the Town were better suited to the conditions, because Lornie might have given them the lead in almost the first minute, and Pacey also went close.

TWO SCRAPPY GOALS

However, Portsmouth found their stride and went into a shock lead with two scrappy goals, both of which were of the preventable variety.

In the 13th minute, Harris came racing through to deliver a shot that Baynham caught, but he could not prevent the ball breaking away from him and GORDON was on hand to hit it through.

Five minutes later, McCann made a centre from the left and SAUNDERS beat Bramwell in the jump for the ball which went underneath Baynham as he moved to his right.

That seemed to be the beginning of the end of the Town, but at least they had the courage to hit back, and after 27 minutes TURNER put them back into the game with a first-time shot after Walden had beaten Wilson cleverly.

In point of fact, Armstrong should have saved because he got both hands to the ball, which slipped under him as he fell and rolled over the line.

Towards the interval Portsmouth were firmly in command, but the Town, mainly through the liveliness of Walden, made some show of defiance early in the second half, but there was not sufficient thrust among the remainder of the line to turn his work to account.

McCANN SETTLED IT

Much the better chances went the way of Portsmouth, but it was not until two minutes from the end that the Town's faint hope of rescuing a point finally evaporated.

Then McCANN, former Luton inside forward, chased a pass from Barton, held off Kelly's challenge, drew Baynham from goal, and turned the ball in from an acute angle as he disappeared into the crowd over the low wall.

Walden apart, it was difficult to award many credit marks to the Town forward line, although

McKechnie had quite a good first half and Turner showed some isolated flashes of his old power.

Far too much Davies allowed himself to remain in the grip of that solid centre-half, Snowden, and Lornie was a failure on the left wing.

Both McGuffie and Pacey made solid contributions in the middle line, and Kelly, although frequently harassed, stood up to pressure quite well.

At least there was determination in defence, and McNally came more successfully out of a rather difficult situation than did Bramwell, who was left stranded too often.

Nor was this one of Baynham's happier days, because he did not handle the ball with his customary assurance and seemed lacking in confidence in dealing with high crosses.

PORTSMOUTH: Armstrong; Gunter, Wilson; Harris, Snowden, Dickinson; Barton, Gordon, Saunders, McCann, Dodson.

LUTON TOWN: Baynham; McNally, Bramwell; McGuffie, Kelly, Pacey; Walden, Turner, Davies, McKechnie, Lornie.

Referee: J. S. Loynton, Solihull. Attendance: 12,428.

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