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THE TIMES

Charlton take the accolade

Charlton Athletic 0 Liverpool 0

The talk before the match was of a comfortable away victory, but those Charlton supporters who predicted such an outcome badly under-estimated their team. Many among the 16,564 crowd at Selhurst Park came to watch the title contenders, Liverpool, but stayed to applaud lowly Charlton, who shared the points despite being down to 10 men for the last half-an-hour.

The fact that Charlton's wounds were self-inflicted did nothing to dispel the feeling that this was Liverpool's lucky day. Charlton's first casualty was their centre half, Thompson, who damaged his ribs when he ran into the advertising hoardings behind the goal. He struggled on until half-time, when he was replaced by Lee. But then Lee himself tweaked ligaments in his ankle after falling awkwardly, and took no further part.

Despite these misfortunes, Charlton continued to make life difficult for the champions and credit must go to the manager, Linnie Lawrence, and his players for doing their homework.

Liverpool were never allowed to settle into their usual smooth rhythm. Forced onto the defensive from the start, they were - untypically - prepared to kick anywhere for safety. But they survived because the ball refused to run for Charlton, and most of the important decisions by the referee went in their favour. One of them early in the second half was to prove a turning point. Mr Cooper ignored Charlton's claims for a penalty when Colin Walsh appeared to be brought down by Beglin. Shortly afterwards, Lee was injured and Charlton's last chance of victory had gone.

The loss of Lee was particularly hard on the in-form Melrose, who was left to fight a lone battle up front. Melrose came closest to supplying the goals which would have provided the shock result of the day. At the other end, Charlton's goalkeeper, Bolder, who was at Anfield for two years without playing in the first team, had the satisfaction of preventing Rush from scoring an undeserved winner in the closing minutes.

For Liverpool, only Lawrenson and Grobbelaar came up to scratch. Liverpool's passing and control were unusually poor, and apart from losing ground in the championship race they are beset by injury problems. Hansen and Venison were late withdrawals, and joined Molby, Johnston and the player-manager, Kenny Dalglish, on being ruled out of selection. Ablett, Hansen's deputy, had a testing time on his debut.

CHARLTON ATHLETIC: R Bolder; J Humphrey, M Reid, G Shipley, S Thompson (sub: R Lee), P Shirtliff, M Stuart, A Curbishley, J Melrose, M Aizlewood, C Walsh.

LIVERPOOL: B Grobbelaar; G Gillespie, J Beglin, M Lawrenson, R Whelan, G Ablett, P Walsh (sub: A Irvine), S Nicol, I Rush, J Wark, S McMahan.

Referee: K Cooper.



THE SUNDAY TIMES

Lifeless Liverpool must fear future

Charlton 0 Liverpool 0

A HEARTENING display of courage and application by Charlton, reduced to 10 men for the last half-hour. A depressingly dull, leaden and inadequate display by Liverpool, who must really now be feared for the future, if not for the present. Even the return of Molby can scarcely make up for all the deficiencies which they showed yesterday at Selhurst.

For those of us brought up on the attractive Charlton teams of the 1940s, the teams of Don Welsh, Sam Bartram, Sailor Brown and Bert Johnson, it is dispiriting to watch the club play not at The Valley, but at remote Selhurst Park. Some day soon, one hopes, now that they are back in the First Division, they will also be back at Charlton.

Certainly, against a Liverpool team strangely without authority, Charlton showed a pleasing willingness to take on their might foe with football, rather than with long balls, and mere hustling.

They had much of the early play; indeed, Liverpool did not even achieve a corner until 37 minutes had gone by. Two minutes after that, they had their first notable shot, a left-footer by their debutant Ablett, a left-sided midfield player.

To see a player in Liverpool's team who has come up through the junior ranks is rather like seeing a street singer at La Scala. The chance of a shot like this was just what the young fellow, surrounded by so many expensive and distinguished transfers, needed.

But still Liverpool could not dominate the game and a Charlton team which has plenty of gifted footballers, not least the experienced centre forward Melrose, and that excellent deep leftflanker, Walsh.

Thompson, who had fallen painfully over an advertising placard early in the match, was forced to stay in the dressing room after the interval, his place at centre back being taken by Aizlewood, while Lee, a striker, went on to the right of midfield.

Liverpool's own midfield very clearly and badly missed the enormous presence of Molby, but at least they had a referee who smiled on them. Seven minutes into the second half, Colin Walsh, running in strongly from the right, was impeded by Gillespie. The referee turned his back on it, and simply ran away, upfield.

As if Charlton had not enough difficulties to face, they were cut down to 10 men on the hour, when their substitute, Lee, collapsed near the right touchline, and could scarcely hobble from the field, let alone play on.

Liverpool remained unbelievably pallid, still unable to grasp the game by the throat.

Seventeen minutes from the end, McMahan did get in a strong but straight shot from outside the box, but Bolder had no trouble with it. At this point Liverpool took off Paul Walsh, and brought on another youngster in Irvine. The combination of Walsh and Rush had been peculiarly ineffective.

The question of whether there will be life at Liverpool after Rush gave place to that of whether there is life there now, though seven minutes from the end only an excellent dive by Bolder prevented Rush giving Liverpool a lead they scarcely deserved.

Charlton continued to play with splendid morale and had a good shot by Walsh taken by Grobbelaar.

You could not help thinking that Dalglish is still of enormous importance to Liverpool on the field. The absence of Hansen was probably less influential. The deployment of Wark in midfield was quite unproductive: if he is not snapping up chances in the penalty box, his contribution seems to be negligible.

Weather: sunny. Ground: soft. Charlton (4-4-2): Bolder: Humphrey, Thompson (sub: Lee 46min): Shirtliff. Reid: Shipley, Aizlewood, Curbishley, C Walsh: Melrose, Stuart.

Liverpool (4-4-2): Grobbelaar: Nicol, Lawrenson, Gillespie, Beglin: Whelan, Wark, McMahan, Ablett: Rush, P Walsh (sub: Irvine 73 min).

Referee: K Cooper.