

The Boot Was On The Other Foot This Time

By Chiltern

LUTON TOWN 1 BRISTOL ROVERS ... 2

This was the Portsmouth Cup-tie in reverse with, this time the Town being dictated to by a team from a lower Division to the intense disappointment of their fans who largely made up the biggest Cup-tie attendance in the club's history.

There was no doubt about which was the better side on the day's play, for the Rovers had those vital things which the Town lacked—directness, forcefulness and the disposition to have a crack at goal.

In fact, the Town were given the run around by a team which they were fancied to beat comfortably after their Portsmouth performance. Suffice to say that there was no comparison between the Town team that accounted for Pompey and the one that put up such a mediocre showing last Saturday.

What is the answer to this? Probably it lies in the fact that the First Division side allowed the Town the time in which to make their attacks, whereas the Rovers, coming in to meet the ball all the time, never gave them a real opportunity to settle down.

A change of tactics by Luton in the second half might have helped, but they persisted in the close passing game and made few attempts to move the ball quickly and hard, which might have caused the strong, solid-looking Rovers' defence some trouble.

Yet the opening stages gave little hint of what was to follow, and even those who were a trifle afraid of the outcome of this tie brightened up considerably after seeing the happenings of the early minutes.

EARLY GOAL FOR TOWN

There might easily have been a goal to the Town with the game only two minutes old, for Davie headed on to the bar, but when, 11 minutes later, WATKINS opened the scoring, the Town were installed as hotter favourites than ever.

They could scarcely have expected the force with which the Rovers hit back after this reverse. Instead of having a settling effect on the Town, the goal seemed to inspire the visitors, who went all out for an equaliser.

With a bit more luck and against a less able goalkeeper than Streten they would have reached level terms before they did, which was after 30 minutes, when LAMBDEN banged the ball into an empty net after Streten had done the only thing possible by leaving his goal to stop a shot from Roost, who was clear of all other opposition.

The ball rebounded from Streten's legs to Lambden, who made no mistake with a well-judged shot.

By the time the interval was reached the odds had shifted in the Rovers' favour with perhaps the only query being whether they could stand until the end the cracking pace they had set throughout the first half.

That there was no doubt about that they soon demonstrated, for with the second half nine minutes old, PETHERBRIDGE scored a clever individual goal and for some time following that, the Rovers dictated the play with the Town able to do little about it.

When at last a rally did come from Luton about 20 minutes from the end, the Rovers' forwards hurriedly reinforced the defence and they had a trying time for some 10 minutes during which there were a couple of narrow escapes.

Hoyle risked a serious injury in saving from Davie at point-blank range and later Pitt kicked off the goal-line in a desperate Town raid in which Owen, Davie and Lambden were all injured.

This phase passed, and with it the Town's chance of appearing in the last 16, for Rovers took command again in the closing minutes.

DEFENCE WAS UNCERTAIN

Seldom has the Town defence looked so uncertain and so uneasy as in this match. The first-time passing and hard following-up by the Rovers worried them continually and, in addition, there was the craft and cleverness of Petherbridge, who gave Aberne one of his most unfruitful afternoons since joining the club.

Cooke was more successful without being anything like so assured as usual either in his tackling and his kicking.

Although Watkins had a fair game, there was nothing like the dominance at wing-half that the Town needed against this go-ahead attack, for Morton had a poor day.

All this made Owen's task far from easy, for in addition to the necessity for keeping an eye on Lamoden, he had to try to cover up gaps on many other occasions.

Which meant that it was just as well that Streten reached peak form again, and he certainly did not deserve to be on the losing side, for he made a series of brilliant saves, especially in the first half.

Main honours in attack went to Stobbart for his untiring and clever work. Davie, a little too elaborate at times, yet had a reasonably good game, and Glover made many accurate centres.

The same could not be said of Wyldes who was blotted out of the game by Bamford and made an unhappy return to the senior side. As for Shanks, hard though he worked, he scarcely showed commensurate results in what he achieved.

LUTON TOWN. Streten; Cooke, Aberne; Morton, Owen, Watkins; Glover, Shanks, Stobbart, Davie, Wyldes.

BRISTOL ROVERS: Hoyle; Bamford, Fox; Pitt, Warren, Sampson; Petherbridge, Bradford, Lambden, Roost, Watling.

Referee: R. J. Burgess, Reading.