

TOWN MADE THEIR SCORING EFFORT TOO LATE

PORTSMOUTH 3, LUTON TOWN 2

By CHILTERN

LA TE goal experts though they have become, the Town left it too late at Portsmouth last night when trailing three goals behind. They did not make their first scoring effort until eight minutes from the end.

Another goal followed with three minutes to go, but only one more half chance of dramatically saving a point cropped up and so the Town's unbeaten record went by the board.

First and foremost, there could be admiration for the way in which the team never gave up what must have seemed to them very much a lost cause because they were three down at half-time, and until the closing stages did not really look like improving that unfortunate position.

There was a lesson to be learned and one that needs to be digested pretty quickly.

That is that the clever brand of football such as the Town played for quite long spells needs something more to be allied to if points are to be collected regularly, especially away from home.

Not until the late stages did the forwards show anything approaching the killer instinct in front of goal.

In midfield they weaved cleverly and looked a smooth outfit, but by and large made very little of the down-to-earth Portsmouth defence.

Defensively too, the Town seemed to need to be better equipped to deal with the dashing, forthright, no-nonsense tactics that they are bound to meet often in the second division.

In the end, though, they gained marks for their fight to salvage a point from this unpromising situation, and had marks been given for sheer football ability they would have been well ahead.

George Cummins after all did not come into consideration, because unexpectedly he reported a badly puffed-up knee, and the Town continued with an unchanged team.

PORTSMOUTH: Beattie; Rutter, Dickinson; Gunter, Snowdon, Chapman; Priscott, Newman, Saunders, Blackburn, Cutler.

LUTON TOWN: Baynham; Dunne, Daniel; Morton, Brown, Pacey; Bingham, Turner, McBride, Groves, Imlach.

Referee: A. L. Mason, of Maidstone.

In three minutes Portsmouth were a goal ahead when **NEWMAN** swept the ball into the net after it had been pushed past Pacey, and Morton had missed his kick completely just inside his own penalty area.

Town attempts at making ground were being driven back without anything more effective than a sliced shot by Imlach.

On the greasy surface speculative shots were apt to count, as Chapman showed when he tried one from over 30 yards, and the ball shot narrowly wide of a post.

A close call for Portsmouth came when Beattie punched out a strong free kick by Morton and the rebound ran kindly for the defenders.

Claims for a penalty for hands against Daniel were turned down obviously on the grounds that it was an unintentional case.

SHOOTING FROM CLOSE RANGE

From the Town there were signs that demands for more shooting from reasonable range were being obeyed where possible and they had done more in this line than Portsmouth.

McBride brought Beattie to his knees with a well-hit drive, but it was Portsmouth who scored again after 31 minutes through **SAUNDERS** who nodded the ball through after Baynham and Blackburn had gone up together for a cross by Prescott.

Worse was to follow because

after 39 minutes Portsmouth secured their third goal with **SAUNDERS** again the scorer this time direct from a long clearance kick by Beattie who had saved from Imlach.

Half-time: Portsmouth 3, Luton 0.

Determination showed early in the Town's attempts to improve their unhappy position, but it failed to get them to close quarters and all that came were two long-range shots with a somewhat sketchy sense of direction from Turner and Pacey.

When Imlach was brought down by Rutter, Daniel planted the free kick straight into the hands of a grateful Beattie.

Although the Town were having more of the play and producing some neat football up to the point of the penalty area it was not promising to get them back into this game.

When McBride did have a chance at shorter range, he sent the ball much too high and wide.

Portsmouth were seldom dangerous now, but that was not helping the Town.

RAIN BECAME DOWNPOUR

Rain was falling not too heavily for most of the match but 15 minutes from the end it became a downpour and the turf was now really soggy and treacherous.

Then came a disallowed goal by Newman that raised the anger of the crowd, and the slow hand-clap broke out all around.

There had not been much of a glimmer of hope for the Town since half-time, but now it seemed completely non-existent with Portsmouth right back in the game and forcing the Town on the defensive.

However, with eight minutes left that glimmer of hope did appear when **TURNER** reduced the Town's arrears with a no-nonsense first time shot low into the corner of the net after a centre from the left had reached him via Chapman.

FLARED INTO LIFE

With just three minutes left this game suddenly flared into life when **BINGHAM** headed the Town's second goal with great precision into the far corner of the net from a choice centre by Imlach.

While this was going on Rutter was lying injured after an attempted tackle on Imlach and there was a hold-up while he received attention before the game could be restarted.

Now the Town were in full cry with everybody in the Portsmouth half on the field and during a full-scale raid during which the ball cannoned off the legs of Portsmouth defenders, Bingham pulled the ball across the face of the goal.

Attendance 15,176.