

RALLY BROUGHT A GLORIOUS VICTORY

No Holding Town Once First Goal Arrived

By CHILTERN

LUTON TOWN 4, BRISTOL ROVERS 2

MORE excitement was packed into the last 25 minutes at Kenilworth-road on Saturday than is contained usually in a whole match, with the Town coming from behind to turn what had seemed to be a hollow defeat into a glorious victory.

Nothing less likely had seemed to be on the cards than this because the Town, for an hour, had played like a team without confidence and hope against the strong, fast Rovers.

Not until they took a leaf from the book of their opponents and began to move the ball about and go in to meet it did the first glimmer of hope begin to appear but, once they scored their first goal, there was no holding them and Rovers looked bewildered at the complete turn of events after they had held a 2-0 lead.

First stage of the rally did not come until the 65th minute when TRACEY obtained his first League goal by sweeping the ball through during a scramble after Turner had had a close range shot stopped near the line.

The Town were level four minutes later when McBRIDE smacked the ball well wide of Radford after a smart movement by the left-wing pair.

McBride was again involved in the goal that put the Town ahead after 75 minutes because he fired in a hard drive that Radford could not hold and SAMPSON, running straight on to the rebound, could not help driving the ball into his own net.

Apart from a couple of shots by Purdon, Rovers had no answer to the new-found drive and confidence of the Town and, before TURNER completed the scoring with a great shot five minutes from the end, McBride had left an ugly muddy patch on their bar and had also headed inches wide.

UNBELIEVABLE RECOVERY

So poor had the Town been in the earlier stages that such a recovery was almost unbelievable and it delighted the crowd of 9,373, unfortunately the lowest of the season, partly because of the bad weather.

Starved of goals for so long, the supporters viewed the proceedings with a good deal of relish yet, at half-time, most of them must have been resigned to another defeat and a worsening of the Town's League position.

More than anything else, the change of tactics achieved this minor miracle and in the last half an hour, the forwards showed such enthusiasm and eagerness as to make one wonder why something better had not been achieved earlier.

Maybe, they needed time in which to settle down after the changes, but they were unrecognisable as the attack of the first hour which has posed scarcely any danger to the Rovers' defence.

Spencer, who had shown signs of liveliness and ability to work the ball in the first half, was constantly in the picture afterwards and formed a forceful wing with the direct Noake in the closing stages when McBride emerged as the dangerous, sharp-shooting leader the Town hoped he was when they signed him from Wolves.

Turner was always a source of potential danger and Tracey, occupying his third different position in consecutive matches, made a fair job as deputy for Bingham, showing signs that he may well settle down there.

Defensively, the Town were none too impressive in the first half, midway through which Rovers obtained both their goals in the space of six minutes.

First, PURDON accepted a gift when he tapped the ball through after Collier had pushed a header from Bradford on to the inside of the post.

Then, BRADFORD was on hand to ram into the net a rebound from Collier after he had failed to hold on to a shot from Hooper.

At this stage, Rovers were rampant, but their shooting was not accurate enough to enable them to put a triumphant rally by the Town completely out of court.

Like the forwards, the defence improved as the game wore on, with Brown taking the honours for being the most consistent member of it.

Groves did a fair job without emerging as anything approaching a dominant figure until the late stages and Pacey improved after a poor first half.

One of the early mistakes of the defence was to wait for the ball, one to which Hawkes was particularly prone and Dunne was the better full-back, though some of his clearances were a little haphazard to say the least.

Inclusion of Collier brought added experience to the last line. His handling of the ball was faulty at times, but that was something of which Radford was also guilty and was due in no small measure to the greasiness of the ball.

LUTON TOWN. — Collier; Dunne, Hawkes; Brown, Groves, Pacey; Tracey, Turner, McBride, Spencer, Noake.

BRISTOL ROVERS. — Radford; Hillard, Watling; Sykes, Pyle, Sampson; Jarman, Mabbutt, Bradford, Purdon, Hooper.

Referee.—P. Rhodes, York.

WHAT THE OTHER CRITICS SAID

"Well, you can never tell! Fiddling, feeble Luton, two down, suddenly became a fighting, accurate Luton. It could be the turning point for them.

"Luton's final goal five minutes from the end only confirmed that by then there was only one team in it."—"The People."

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"Perhaps desperation led to Luton's strength—but their young forward line in which Leslie Spencer made a fine debut, suddenly became a lively, hard-hitting force of which the cumbersome Rovers' defence could make little.

"To rub it in Gordon Turner scored a great goal five minutes from the end."—"Sunday Express."

"When Sampson put through his own goal in the 75th minute and Luton's Turner broke through and scored well in the 85th justice was no more than done.

"Praise Luton's Allan Brown, whose stroke play becomes more immaculate every time I see him; praise McBride for never ceasing to try at centre-forward."—"Sunday Dispatch."

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"The transformation came when they suddenly seemed to realise that directness in attack and first-time shooting usually pays dividends.

"Luton had been at rock bottom in the first-half.

"Then the enthusiasm of the left-wing pair, David Noake and Leslie Spencer, caught on and the Rovers' defence found themselves completely pinned down and hard put to keep Luton out."—"Empire News."

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"Luton must have had a pep talk during the interval. For most of the second-half they were on the attack.

"Before Tracey netted in the 66th minute he had a shot kicked off the line by Hillard."—"News of the World."

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"Luton refused to be written off. Spencer stopped trying to beat three men in every move. Joe McBride stopped losing himself on the wing, and Allan Brown, the only class player in the match, drove his forwards unsparingly."—"Daily Express."