

TOWN LOST THEIR GRIP

ROTHERHAM CAME NEAR TO SHARING POINTS

Accuracy Difficult on Worn Pitch

LUTON TOWN 2, ROTHERHAM UTD. 1

WITHOUT any doubt at all, the drastic drop in the temperature had an adverse effect on the Town's attendance for their home match with Rotherham United this afternoon. There was the added point, of course, that Friars Wash races always prove to be a considerable counter-attraction to football.

To fill the vacancy left by the injury to Alec Ashworth, Manager Sam Bartram did one of the few possible things and brought back George Cummins, who was dropped after the match with Bristol Rovers three weeks ago.

To make room for him McGuffie switched to inside-right and yesterday there had to be an unexpected change in the half-back line because of an injury to Bob Morton during training. In came Dave Pacey for another chance in the League side and this was the only defensive change because Ron Baynham, about whom there had been considerable doubt early in the week, passed a fitness test yesterday.

Rotherham, slightly better off than the Town in the League table, and accounted as out of the danger of which the Town still had a slight fear—relegation—were strengthened by the return of Bambridge. He had to stand down from the mid-week match at Swansea because of injury, and Swann deputised.

There was bright sunshine but a chilly wind when the teams came out on a ground that was not only bare over much of its area, but hard, too.

In fact, conditions were similar to those that obtained at Leyton last Saturday and the pre-match shower that threatened and did not materialise would have been welcome.

Before the match there was a dancing display by the Butlin Young Ladies who have been here on several previous occasions.

LUTON TOWN: Baynham; McNally, Bramwell; Pacey, Kelly, Groves; McCann, McGuffie, Turner, Cummins, Fleming.

ROTHERHAM UTD.: Ironside; Perry, Morgan; Lambert, Madden, Waterhouse; Kirkman, Weston, Sawyer, Houghton, Bambridge.

Referee: H. G. New, Havant.

Groves, deputising for Morton as captain, lost the toss, and the Town defended the Kenilworth-road end. They were first away, and there was a rather risky back pass by Madden which could have been serious, because Ironside was on his way out of goal, but he grabbed the ball safely.

TOWN AHEAD

Clever work by Turner, Groves and Cummins ended with McGuffie gaining what seemed certain to be a corner, but the referee awarded a free kick on the linesman's signal.

With five minutes gone the Town went ahead in what was really the first serious move by either team. After some slight pressure on the Rotherham right the ball was cleared to Turner, in midfield, and he immediately pushed a beautiful pass right down the middle, which went over the head of the tall Madden.

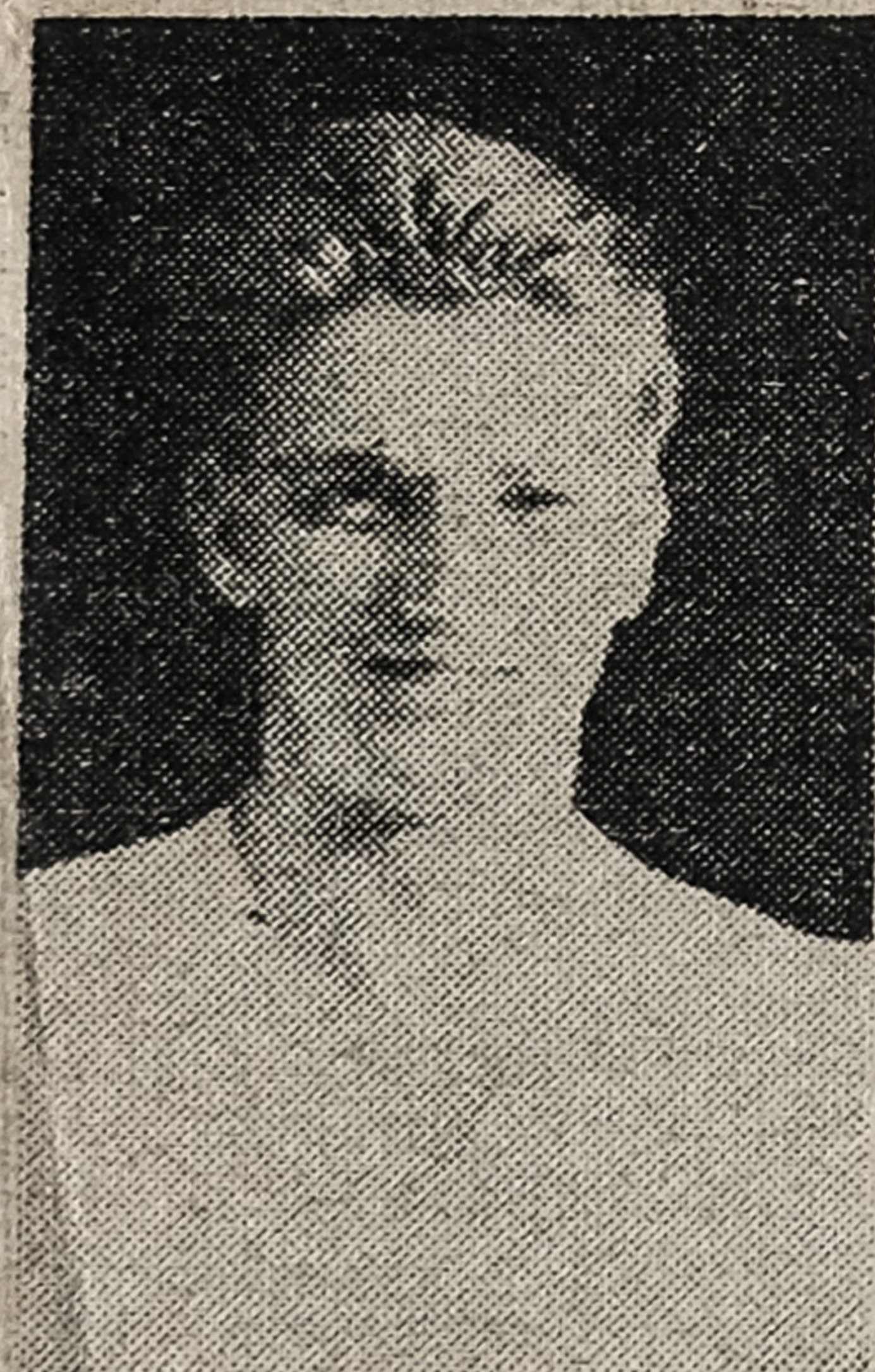
McGUFFIE had foreseen that eventuality, and he fastened on to the ball to stab it into the net as Ironside came out in a terrific

hurry. He was powerless to do anything about it, and the ball sped into an empty net.

On the early evidence, Rotherham were vulnerable down the middle and a pass by McCann nearly caught them napping again as Turner probed away at goal.

With the Town on top they were awarded a free kick which Cummins took and he chipped the ball over the defensive wall but Ironside saw it all the way and held it safely.

Rotherham tried to fight back, without success though. They



From a pass by Turner, McGuffie fastened on to the ball 5 minutes after the start and stabbed it into the net, to give the Town the lead.

had a free kick for a foul by Bramwell, of which Lambert made poor use, and then Kirkman shot tamely wide from quite a good position.

ACCURACY DIFFICULT

With the ball bouncing about disconcertingly on the worn pitch, accuracy was difficult to achieve, as was adequate control of the ball. However, the Town came away in menacing style through a movement begun by Turner and carried on by Fleming to McCann who, from 25 yards, showed the right idea by blazing away at goal but was a couple of yards too high.

The Town were still the more



In the 29th minute, Fleming coolly accepted a well-made chance by McGuffie, and easily placed the ball out of Ironside's reach.

dangerous and a crisp movement, in which Cummins played a part, brought some fumbling by Ironside when he went to grab a flick by one of his own players.

Offside was a bogey to both teams in their attempts to make ground, but Luton continued to be the more enterprising in attack and several times the Rotherham defence looked distinctly shaky. Twice in quick succession McGuffie had chances to add to the lead and on each occasion Turner had a hand in creating the opening.

On the first McGuffie, challenged as he shot, sent the ball just wide of the far post, and on the second Turner, having worked the ball down the left wing, McGuffie just failed to make contact when bang in front of goal, with the fast-moving low cross.

It was mostly defence for Rotherham and they were in trouble again when McCann came in along the dead line and lobbed the ball wide of the far post.

TWO UP

Although they had a little more of the play for a time there was no sort of threat from the Rotherham forwards against a compact, sound tackling Town defence. In fact, Baynham's most difficult task was to field on the bounce a long, high lob by Morgan, made from just inside his own half.

With 29 minutes gone the Town increased their lead deservedly because they had been the team with far more constructive ideas. FLEMING was the successful marksman and he coolly accepted a well-made chance by McGuffie, who raced down the left wing before turning the ball into the middle.

Coolly, Fleming gained control of it, resisted what must have been a temptation to have a quick shot at goal, in favour of controlling the ball, taking it on and easily placing it out of Ironside's reach.

Baynham had to go high in the air to cut out a corner from Kirkman which he gathered at the second attempt, but the Rotherham forwards were not looking a very sprightly lot and the Town continued to be very much in command of the situation.

Difficulty in controlling the bouncing ball spoilt a chance for McGuffie after Cummins had made a splendid opening because, with the net looming in front of him, McGuffie was tackled by Madden before he had time to make his shot.

A spurt by Rotherham brought them a corner from which Houghton headed into the hands of Baynham but there was a more serious threat when a passing movement inside the Town

half between Bramwell and Cummins broke down and Kirkman went away to make a centre which, however, was too close to Baynham to be effective.

Just before half-time Turner, from deep in the inside-left position, headed just wide from a long centre by McCann.

And Rotherham were forced on the defensive by a three-pronged drive by the Town inside trio, but Madden, somewhat fortunately, got his team out of trouble.

Hands by McCann brought a long free-kick by Morgan that Baynham held comfortably. Half-time:

LUTON TOWN 2
ROTHERHAM UTD .. 0

A long, awkwardly bouncing ball into the Town penalty area provided the first incident of the second half, and wisely Kelly left it to Baynham, who easily got up above Sawyer and cleared.

Straight from this, McGuffie caught the Rotherham defence napping, and with Ironsides having misguidedly left his goal, Turner, from 15 yards, tried to drive the ball in. In the path of his shot, though, were two Rotherham defenders, and off the second, Morgan, the ball was safely deflected for a corner.

A bad pass by Kelly, intercepted near the middle line by Houghton, looked dangerous to the Town until Sawyer and Kirkman got themselves offside as the Town defence moved out.

With the second half five minutes old there was a shock to the Town complacency when Kirkman broke through to reduce the Rotherham arrears.

There was a forward pass by Weston which Groves failed to clear, falling as he attempted to do so, and KIRKMAN was on the spot to control the ball and drive it firmly into the far corner of the net well out of the reach of Baynham.

An immediate response came from the Town and McCann headed just too high from close in. Very nearly this game was pitched into the melting pot when Bambridge, who had been well held so far, defeated a challenge by McNally, who looked in imminent danger of conceding a penalty as he tried to stop the winger. Houghton missed completely the centre as it came across.

NOT PAYING FOR ERRORS

There was still uneasiness in the Rotherham defence, which was now facing the strong sun, but they were not called upon to pay for their errors because the Town at this stage were lacking crispness in front of goal.

Hands by Morgan in trying to stop McCann gave the Town a free kick they would have been better without because the winger had already got the ball through to Turner when the whistle went and Pacey's kick was easily headed clear.

With a quarter of an hour of the second half gone Sam Bartram came down to the trainer's bench in time to see Turner force Madden to give away a corner which the centre-forward took, the ball spiralling over the bar for a goal kick.

Had Turner been able to control quickly a centre from Fleming the Town's position, which

How The Goals Came

McGUFFIE for Luton after 5 minutes.

FLEMING for Luton after 29 minutes.

KIRKMAN for Rotherham after 50 minutes.

was not looking so bright now as it had, would have been eased considerably but the ball bounced off his shin and rolled to Ironside.

Then the goalkeeper was in some trouble when challenged by Turner. Cummins, gaining the rebound, seemed to have won a corner, though the referee disagreed.

A sharp breakaway by Rotherham saw Sawyer outpace Kelly in a race for the ball but he was forced to such an angle that his attempt went wide of the far post.

Certainly Rotherham, though still not having the same amount of pressure as the Town were enjoying, were looking the more dangerous because the Town had to a large extent lost their grip in mid-field.

Ironside clawed down a high centre by Cummins, with Turner challenging closely, and there was a definite chance of increasing the lead when McCann split the defence with a through pass, but McGuffie found himself shut out by Waterhouse, who gave away a corner.

There was still an acute possibility that Rotherham would draw level in one of their sharp raids, and had there been a quicker reaction from Houghton it might have occurred then, but the ball ran away from him and finished harmlessly wide.

A more constructive piece of work by the Town on their left wing looked promising until Fleming spoiled the effect by putting the ball into the side net.

LITTLE PUNCH

A lot of the life had gone out of the game, and neither team was showing much punch in front of goal.

Baynham had some difficulty in hanging on to a high centre from Weston and although he fell as Sawyer challenged him, he retained possession.

Again Baynham was in action as Rotherham made greater efforts to draw level and from under the bar he pulled down a header by Kirkman.

With about ten minutes left the Town were forced right back on to the defensive and they were

lucky to escape a case of obstruction by McNally on Bambridge, which was the means of the pressure easing.

The forwards had lost much of their former constructive ability but there was a slight improvement. McCann went up high in an attempt to head through a centre from the left, but all he got for his pains was a shaking up as he fell heavily.

When Lambert fouled McCann there was a free kick to the Town which McCann placed badly, but the ball was returned into the goalmouth, and the Town came within inches of securing the goal that would have ended their apparent anxiety.

First McGuffie drove the ball against the foot of the post and blazed away again when he secured the rebound. Ironside, probably unsighted, went down hurriedly to grasp the ball under his body.

In a late bid to save the match, Madden came through with a good deal of enterprise, but his finishing was in keeping with much that had gone before, because he was well off the target area.

A determined effort by Turner was stopped at the last ditch by Ironside, and then came a free kick from another foul on McCann. Turner turned it into the net, but the whistle had gone some seconds before for off-side against McGuffie.

Danger to the Town came when Kirkman, who was now in the middle, with Sawyer at outside-right, set an attack in motion and Bramwell's clearance cannoned off a Rotherham player to Sawyer, who, failing to steady himself, blasted it yards too high.

Result:
LUTON TN 2
ROTHERHAM UTD .. 1