

Ragged Fight By Town's Stand-In Men

By CHILTERN

61/62(LC)

LUTON TOWN 0, ROTHERHAM 0

AFTER a scrambling 90 minutes at Kenilworth-road last night the Town achieved the result which I fancy they most wanted to avoid in their League cup-tie with Rotherham.

A replay at Millmoor next Tuesday scarcely suits their book in view of the present injury position and the crowded programme they have faced already.

With six players who were in the reserves last Saturday, the Town put up a display that was remarkable more for its enthusiasm than its skill.

A change in every position except inside-right from last Saturday was made in the forward line, which did not settle down into a cohesive force and what few chances were created were missed.

Largely, it was a disappointing forward showing, but the Rotherham defence, ably marshalled by the tall Madden, was sound. There was an evident lack of experience on the extreme wings and Lornie was not the spearhead the Town wanted.

Nor were the busy Rotherham forwards much more accurate in their shooting, though Standen, playing for the first time this season, was given an opportunity to show his ability and he made a couple of great saves.

Mostly, it was a ragged struggle with defences always on top, and the Town's rearguard, though there were some cases of lax marking, came through pretty well.

Watched by Leicester and West Bromwich, McNally had quite a good match, but Morton was the pick of the defence, although Collins did an adequate job.

LUTON TOWN: Standen; McNally, Bramwell; Morton, Collins, Pacey; Fairchild, Ashworth, Lornie, Groves, Jardine.

ROTHERHAM UTD.: Morritt; Perry, Morgan; Lambert, Madden, Waterhouse; Webster, Kirkman, Houghton, Weston, Bambridge.

Referee: J. Finney, Hereford.

There should have been a first minute goal for the Town when Groves split the visiting defence with a shrewd pass and Ashworth, perhaps put off by the nearness of Fairchild, missed the far post by inches.

Rotherham began to have much of the play but their shooting, mostly from longish range, was well wide of the mark. Several times Fairchild looked dangerous, but he missed a chance through being too hurried, and then shot over.

Nearest approach to a goal came when Pacey hit the foot of the post from a free-kick for hands by Kirkham. With the ball moving freely on the greasy surface, play was fast and open, with neither team holding command for long, and there was little evidence of finishing power.

Standen, well out of his goal, pulled down a high shot from Houghton during a sharp Rotherham raid. That apart, there was not much excitement and worthwhile shots were at a premium.

Only one from the Town for some time came from Morton, but Morritt saved comfortably enough. Standen showed good judgment in grasping a high cross from Webster from under the bar and then punched one-handed a long one from the same player.

Towards half-time Rotherham, profiting by the Town's mistakes, began to get on top, but their finishing was still sub-standard.

Most exciting incident in the half came on the stroke of the interval when Standen made a full-length save from a cracking first-time shot by Kirkham.

Half-time:
LUTON 0
ROTHERHAM 0

With the Town forwards showing little sign of cohesion, Rotherham looked the more impressive in attack, but their shooting continued to be sketchy.

LORNIE SHOULD HAVE SCORED

Yet they came close to taking the lead when Kirkman shot and Standen saved well again. A more constructive raid by the Town,

begun by Groves, brought a centre from Jardine that Lornie just failed to reach with his head.

Encouraged by the crowd, the Town began a spell of pressure during which Lornie should have scored when Morritt was responsible for a bad piece of miss-punching following a long clearance by Standen.

Pacey, who had produced the Town's best shot of the first half, nearly beat Morritt from a centre by Jardine, but the goalkeeper just got his finger tips to the ball and pushed it over.

Goals, however, mostly looked far away and there was never much in it in a game that had developed into a dour struggle.

Bambridge dropped a centre on to the top of the Town bar, but Standen had the ball covered. There was an escape shortly afterwards when Standen first pushed out a point-blank shot by Kirkman, and before the danger passed Webster had a drive blocked by McNally.

As the game neared its end, Lornie missed another chance and McNally nearly snatched a dramatic win with a long high shot that Morritt misjudged in the first instance and only reached at the last split second. Result:

LUTON TOWN 0
ROTHERHAM 0

The attendance was 6,544.