

Town Whirlwind Fails: Rovers Breeze Home

9-12-61 2517

RE-ARRANGED LINE LACKS FINISHING POWER

By "Chiltern"

BRISTOL ROVERS 1, LUTON TOWN 0

THE Eastville ground at Bristol this afternoon looked in better condition than I can ever remember seeing it in recent years.

On the Town's previous visit water was standing on the top, and it was more like a skating rink than a football pitch.

However, after the severe frost earlier this week, milder conditions were prevailing in the West Country and the pitch looked in pretty fair condition, though obviously it was very soft.

Despite their victory last week, the Town made three changes, calculated to remedy a weakness in one position. That was an inside-right, McGuffie, dropping out in favour of John Groves, who made yet another migration from the half-back line.

To make room for Bob Morton in his old place of right-half, Dave Pacey switched to the left.

Manager Sam Bartram was not with the team. He stayed at home to watch two amateurs in the Reserves, and no doubt he waited anxiously for news of how his team switches paid off, because they were just about the end of the possible permutations.

ROVERS FORCED TO MAKE ONE CHANGE

Rovers, who have been having a bad time, relieved matters slightly by gaining a point at Walsall last week, but had to make an alteration against the Town because Hills was unfit. His place at right-back was taken by Davis, a young local who has had quite a considerable amount of first team experience.

There was pale winter sunshine as play began, and among the rather thin crowd was a number from Luton, several of them teenagers.

In the first minutes, in the Town's initial raid on the Rovers' goal, there was a casualty on each side as Pyle raced across to tackle Fleming when the winger closed in for goal. Both went down, both were slightly injured, and there was a stoppage for attention before the goal-kick could be taken.

Both, apparently, were none the worse for the episode.

Good work by Groves, right back in his own half, and Morton, who came sweeping through in brilliant fashion, set the Town going again through Walden, who, however, was brought down heavily.

McNally placed the free-kick

well into the goalmouth and from it the Rovers had two sensational escapes.

First Ashworth headed to the left of Radford, who pushed the ball out with some difficulty. McKechnie returned it, and Walden was dead out of luck with a shot that struck the post and rebounded into play.

It brought a terrific scramble in front of goal, but somehow the Rovers survived.

Looking much the better and more competent side, the Town kept up the pressure, and Pacey set Fleming going. His first centre was cleared, but Walden found Fleming again, only for the left-winger to be caught off-side.

Fine work by Walden, who somehow manoeuvred the ball through a crowd of players, brought another Town surge. McKechnie tried to find a way through for Ashworth, but the centre-forward could not reach the ball, and Pyle came in with a big clearance kick.

Moving the ball about splendidly from man to man, the Town forwards, well backed up by the wing halves, were keeping the home defence at full stretch, and there was a sign of panic about the way in which Davis headed for a corner when a centre from Walden seemed destined to go wide.

Nearly 10 minutes had gone before we saw any semblance of a raid by the Rovers, and then Bumpstead's through pass was much too strong, and Bramwell was able to turn the ball back to Standen comfortably.

McKECHNIE AND GROVES SWITCH

Already McKechnie and Groves had switched positions, maybe according to a pre-arranged plan.

Fine covering by Pacey, who made a firm tackle on Hamilton inside the penalty area, prevented what might have turned out to be a dangerous situation.

Rovers were now showing some improvement after having been handed out a football lesson in the early stages.

Again Rovers escaped when Fleming made a beautiful reverse pass to Ashworth, whose low cross was met by Walden coming in fast. The winger's first-time shot struck Radford, who managed to hold on to the ball as Walden ran through to challenge.

This was a distinct scoring opportunity that Town had let slip away, and there is no doubt

they should have been ahead by now.

The referee had a word with Pacey, apparently for some comment he made when Rovers were awarded a free-kick during another heavy raid on their goal.

Rovers' attacking ideas seemed to be limited to pushing the ball down the middle, a move which caused Town no trouble at all.

TOWN PLAYING IN CLASSY STYLE

Continuing to play a classy brand of football, the Town were producing nearly all the constructive movements, and Rovers were merely holding on, with their defence often baffled.

Yet, when their forwards did at last move in a line, Rovers should have scored, because



Hamilton found a way through, and from his centre Bradford, with all the goal to aim at, headed nearly two yards wide of the post.

Compared with the slick-way in which the Town forwards were finding each other, the methods of the Rovers' attack were more hopeful than anything else, and even Cope essayed a move into the forward line in a neat piece of interpassing with Fleming.

Standen was in direct action for the first time after 20 minutes in dealing with a header by Jarman. The ball bounced first, and Standen easily collected it.

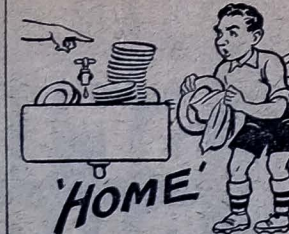
With Morton backing them up splendidly, the Town continued to be the more dangerous, and Ashworth headed inches wide of the post from Walden's centre.

A CORNER TO THE ROVERS

Rovers were more in the game now without contriving to look dangerous, though Pacey had to give away a corner to stop Hamilton.

This was placed so badly by Hooper that McKechnie, on the edge of the penalty area, was able to collect it and start another Town raid. Once again, however, the final move went awry.

Obstruction by McKechnie then gave Rovers a free kick a yard outside the penalty area on the left, and Hooper slammed the ball hard across the face of the goal.



It struck Cope and went for a corner. From this, Hooper had a shot charged down by Cope.

The Rovers' pressure was becoming more persistent now, and they went very close to scoring when Hooper threw himself at a cross from Hamilton and headed the ball just over.

ESCAPE FOR THE TOWN

Hooper, in fact, was developing into a danger man to the Town, and, from the centre-forward position and just outside the penalty area, he produced a terrific drive to which Standen went full-length. He could not reach it and luckily the ball flew just wide of the far post.

Meanwhile, in the face of some hard tackling by the Rovers, some of the early Town smoothness had disappeared, and they

How The Goal Came

HAMILTON for Bristol after 62 minutes.

were looking neither so neat nor so dangerous now.

Their attacks were tending to break down before the danger zone was reached, and their passing, too, had lost some of its early accuracy.

There was a slight stoppage while Groves had attention to a knock on his left knee, but the trouble was only minor, and the restart of play saw Rovers gain a corner on the right.

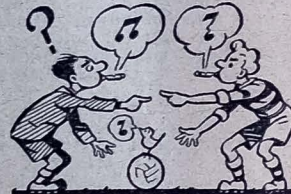
WALDEN CAUGHT OFFSIDE

A foul on McKechnie brought the Town a free-kick just inside the Rovers' half. Bramwell took it, and Groves hooked it on to Walden who, however, was standing offside.

Rovers were getting a number of corners at this stage, and from one of them, Hooper, left unmarked, drove away first time at the ball and sent it soaring over.

In this last 10 minutes or so, Rovers had had more chances than the Town, who were now finding difficulty in reaching close quarters.

However, a good run by Walden brought them a corner on the right, but there was a hold-up before it could be taken, because on an injury to Slocombe, the



Rovers' left-half.

Radford had to punch out a long centre by Ashworth from the left, but the ball went to safety.

Then Pacey, after taking the ball from Hamilton in a tackle, tried to beat Bradford, was dispossessed, and that set Rovers on the move again, only for Jarman to put outside.

Groves did his best to lay on an opening for the on-rushing Pacey, who, however, slipped at the crucial moment. Rovers came away, but took far too long in which to make effective ground, and Bramwell was able to clear.

TOWN DEFENCE DITHERS

Just before half-time, Bramwell put Town's goal in danger by heading the ball straight to Jarman, but got out of it by giving away a corner. This brought a hectic scrimmage in front of the Town goal until Cope headed away.

Then, Walden put the Town in the car again by skying the ball back into his own penalty area, and Hamilton missed a chance of scoring. Half-time:

BRISTOL ROVERS 0
LUTON TOWN 0

In the first minute of the second half, the Town made a fluent movement which ended with Fleming shooting hard and straight at Radford.

There was a prompt Rovers response. They launched a mass raid, which was driven off, and then Slocombe ended it all by shooting well wide.

A long run by Walden, who was causing Frowen a lot of trouble, brought the Town a corner-kick, which Radford

punched away though challenged by Groves.

Morton had a shot beaten down, but Rovers persevered, and Hooper made a high, long centre that Standen plucked out of the air in almost contemptuous style.

CLOSE CALL FOR TOWN

Then, there came a shock for the Town when Hamilton, from the inside-left position, suddenly slewed the ball across the goal with force. Both Bradford and Jarman, diving at it, missed it narrowly.

The Town forwards were now finding each other with something like their early precision without, however, looking a potent force as finishers.

They gained another corner on the left, and before this could be taken there was another minor



stoppage while Radford had some attention to a knee.

A difficult-looking situation for the Town developed when Hooper was found in an open space with no Town defenders within 20 yards of him, but, after he had made ground, McNally blocked his shot, and the attack fizzled out.

There was rather a scrappy element about the play now with not much sign of goals from either team.

Rovers were contriving to have a fair share of the play, but were unable to trouble Standen.

KEEPING THE BALL TOO CLOSE

Some of Town's difficulties stemmed from a tendency to keep the ball too close and to make far too many passes in midfield without achieving any real sort of progress. It also gave the Rovers' defence time to close up, and clear-cut scoring openings were few and far between.

Then came a shock because with 62 minutes gone, Rovers took the lead through HAMILTON.

He looked offside as he took a through pass, and as Standen came out for it he dribbled round the goalkeeper and turned the ball into the net from an acute angle.

The Town-defenders looked at the referee and appealed against the award of a goal, but he was firm in his decision.

There was no doubt that this reverse had shaken the Town, and the Rovers, backed up by the crowd, turned on more pressure. Hooper had a terrific shot beaten down.

There was no doubt now that the Town was up against it, and Jarman made a great dribble in which he beat two opponents before making a shot to which Standen had to go full length.

MORTON RALLIES HIS SIDE

Morton tried to rally the Town and set Walden going, but the winger tried to beat Frowen once too often, and was caught in possession.

With Rovers in full cry now, the Town had little chance to make progress, and Hooper hit the side netting with another powerful drive.

However, the Town did hit back, and in a strong attack Pacey nearly produced an equaliser from the edge of the penalty area. He tried a cleverly lobbed shot that Radford had to push over in a hurry.

Another corner followed, but was scrambled away. Town remained on the attack, and Radford, running out almost to the

RIGHT			LEFT		
BRISTOL ROVERS					
Radford					
Davis		Frowen			
Bumpstead		Pyle		Slocombe	
Jarman	Hamiltor	Bradford	Watkins	Hooper	
Referee			D. H. Howell (Birmingham)		
					
Fleming	McKechnie	Ashworth	Groves	Walder	
Pacey	Cope		Morton		
Bramwell		McNally			
Standen					
LUTON TOWN					
LEFT			RIGHT		



penalty spot, snatched away a pass by Groves for which Ashworth was shaping.

The wandering Hooper then popped up in the inside-right position to bring Standen to his knees with a shot that moved in the air.

The best movement the Town had produced for some time between Ashworth and Fleming, could have produced a goal had not the winger's pass intended for McKechnie landed at the feet of Pyle, who cleared thankfully.

TOWN "GOAL" DISALLOWED

With 12 minutes left, Ashworth got the ball into the net for what seemed to be the Luton equaliser. However, the linesman had his flag upraised, and the referee dis-

It was a sheer disappointment for the Town, especially at this late stage.

CRUEL LUCK FOR TOWN

The Town's cruel luck continued when, with Rovers forced right back on the defensive, Walden, with a brilliant turn of speed, left Frowen almost standing. He made a great low drive that, of all things, beat Radford struck the foot of the post and came back into play.

Then, in a Rovers' breakaway, Bradford got in a pile-driver that Standen saved in style.

Town came back and for the most part it was last-ditch by the Rovers.

Then Pacey came through in a desperate endeavour to gain that elusive goal, but found himself angled. He smashed the ball low across the face of the goal, but there was no-one there to make contact.

PACEY JOINS IN THE ATTACK

Pacey, now right up in the inside-left position, next headed inches wide from a centre by Walden.

With Pacey playing an increasing part in attack, Town gained a corner which McKechnie breasted down in an effort to get the ball under control, but in the end he had to pass to Fleming, who produced one of his weak finishes by putting the ball behind.

In a Rovers breakaway, Bumpstead shot rather uncomfortably close, Standen scampering across his goal. Result:

BRISTOL ROVERS 1
LUTON TOWN 0

allowed the goal, pointing with his hands, presumably indicating an earlier handling offence.

He was surrounded by protesting Town players, including McNally, who came right up from the defence. He would not consult a linesman, however. As far as I could see, Ashworth had not committed any offence.

