

O'Rourke Gets Hat-Trick To Shatter Rovers

28-3-64

TOWN SPARKLE IN BATTLE TO BEAT DROP

By CHILTERN

LUTON TOWN 4, BRISTOL ROVERS 2

AFTER all, despite optimistic hopes yesterday, the Town were without their young centre-half Graham Caleb and inside-right Tommy McKechnie for their vital meeting with Bristol Rovers at Kenilworth-road this afternoon. Neither had recovered from the leg injury he received at Nottingham on Thursday.

This paved the way for the return of the Town's two longest-serving players, Bob Morton and Gordon Turner.

Morton came in at right-half, Dave Pacey switching to centre-half for the first time this season. This is a position which has always been a sort of secondary choice for him, because of his great ability in the air.

McKechnie's absence brought back Turner, who is still the Town's leading scorer this season, and probably this fact would please a section of the supporters who had been critical recently of McKechnie's play.

Rovers, beaten by the only goal at Bournemouth yesterday—and in the words of their manager, Bert Tann, they played badly—re-arranged their half-back line.

Mabbitt, who had to stand down yesterday because of stomach trouble, came back, and Davis, who replaced him, switched to centre-half.

In turn, Stone, who has been occupying that position for the last five weeks, went to right-half in place of Oldfield, who was omitted.

The pitch had dried up very well after the rain earlier in the week, but it was a grey, cheerless sort of afternoon.

FOLLOWING FROM BRISTOL

This was an absolutely vital match for the Town in their struggle to retain their status, but even so, the attendance at the start was only between 5,000 and 6,000, and they included quite a following from Bristol.

In the first minute there was a smart raid begun by Reid, carried on by Turner, and at the end of the story, Walden, who had closed down, forced Hall to go full length to keep out his strong drive.

In two minutes the Town had the tremendous bill of going a goal ahead. Walden gained a corner off Jones G. and placed it beautifully so that O'Rourke, who had got himself into an open space, was able to jump high and head the ball decisively wide of Hall's left side.

Rovers hit back, and Baynham kept out with some difficulty a hard drive by Jarman, and the rebound was eagerly booted away by Lowndes.

Straight from this the Town went away and O'Rourke scored again in the fourth minute. Obviously, the whole Rovers' defence was expecting him to pass to the unmarked Walden, but instead the centre-forward went the other way, and from 20 yards shot for goal.

Hall seemed to have the ball covered, but it definitely moved in flight so that all he could do was to deflect it and it ran into the net off the inside of a post.

So the Town were cock-a-hoop with two goals from their young centre-forward before Rovers had really settled down to their job.

There could have been a reply by the Rovers, because Jones (R.) laid on an opening for Biggs, who, however, found the ball bouncing awkwardly, and Baynham was able to pick it up off the bounce.

Rovers were not out of this game by any means, and Baynham stopped a low drive from Brown, but there was still a punchy look about the Town attack, and Turner, taking aim from just outside the penalty area, saw his shot deflected for a corner.

PLAY SETTLES DOWN EVENLY

Play settled down on an even tenor, with Rovers having a fair amount of the play and struggling hard to overcome their disastrous start.

At the same time, the Town with Pacey covering well in the middle, were showing a determined face in defence.

At the other end, the Town were showing themselves willing to have a crack at goal whenever the opportunity occurred, encouraged, no doubt, by Hall's failure to stop O'Rourke's second goal.

Turner had a go from similar range, but found Jones (G.) in the way, and then there was stoppage while Biggs received attention for an injury which was not serious.

The next incident was a shot from Jones (R.) which Baynham saved at full-length.

There was nearly another goal to the Town when Morton found Whittaker in an open space. The winger slipped the ball to Reid, whose hard cross shot beat Hall completely, but unfortunately

How The Goals Came

O'Rourke for Luton after 2 minutes.
O'Rourke for Luton after 4 minutes.
BIGGS for Bristol Rovers after 24 minutes.
TURNER for Luton after 38 minutes.
BIGGS (penalty) for Bristol Rovers after 73 minutes.
O'Rourke for Luton after 79 minutes.



Gordon Turner notched a third goal for the Town from a free kick after 38 minutes.

McBain had lifted the ball high into the goalmouth.

BRILLIANT RUN BY WHITTAKER

A brilliant run by Whittaker, who beat three men, raised hopes, but his final pass to O'Rourke was

intercepted by Davis.

There was still fight from the Rovers, and Whittaker did well to come across to tackle when Stone was setting himself for a long-range drive.

Reid made a worthy effort to break through, but was obstructed just before he reached the penalty area, and the free-kick was the forerunner of some Town pressure in which O'Rourke was prominent and Turner had a hard drive beaten down.

When Rovers attacked again, a despairing tackle by Pacey at full stretch dispossessed Hamilton as he was threatening to cleave a way through the defence.

NEARLY ANOTHER GOAL FOR TOWN

Reid, when the Town next attacked, was pulled down heavily by Hillard, and Whittaker very nearly scored from the free kick, which flew in just near the post. Hall only just managed to push it out, and Hillard booted the ball out of play.

Free kicks had become frequent, and there was another when Lowndes pulled down Brown but Baynham easily saved Biggs's header.

Town hit back through their two teenagers, O'Rourke and Whittaker, with the latter slamming in the ball, but Davis met it squarely with his head.

Baynham drew applause by cutting out a centre from Jarman after Hillard had brought the ball through.

Rovers were certainly putting up a fight without really suggesting that they could save the game. Indeed, when the Town forwards were on the move they looked the more dangerous, and Hall had to pluck out of the air a cross by



John O'Rourke gave Town a brilliant start in their vital clash with Bristol Rovers by notching two goals in the first four minutes. The first he headed home from a Walden corner-kick and the second he cracked in with a 20-yards drive.

O'Rourke completed his hat-trick with a low drive in the 79th minute after receiving a shrewd pass from Whittaker.

Turner as O'Rourke moved in to challenge.

Hall had to scramble on his hands and knees to keep out near the far post a shot from Turner. Then came a free-kick for Rovers near the Town's penalty area for a foul by Pacey, but the Town centre-half headed out Stone's powerful drive.

Turner got a lucky bounce of the ball on the deadline before pulling it across in the direction of O'Rourke, who would have been left with a "stiter" had not Davis managed to intervene.

There was no doubt that the Town's luck was out when brilliant work by Whittaker brought a centre from him from which Reid headed the ball squarely against the bar. Turner,

waiting for the rebound, could do no more than turn the ball into the hands of Hall, who also saved from the same player a minute later.

PENALTY GOAL FOR ROVERS

Then came a penalty award against the Town. Bramwell, beaten for the ball and trailing behind, went for the ball, and as he made his tackle Hamilton went down full length.

There were protests which availed nothing, as they seldom do, and BIGGS made no mistake from the spot, getting Baynham going the wrong way as he smashed the ball into the net. This was after 73 minutes.

This, of course, made it a completely different story from the Town's point of view. They had the most slender of margins to play with.

There was renewed activity at their end when a corner came, and Baynham pulled down a header by Biggs from under the bar.

Lowndes stuck out a speculative foot, in the right spot as it happened, when a dangerous low cross came from Jones (R.), and, so far as the Town were concerned at this moment, the game was very much in the melting pot.

A free kick against McBain for obstruction brought further trouble, but Pacey rose high to head clear.

However, the initiative had definitely passed to the Rovers since their second goal, and it was some time before the Town swung back into their stride again.

Then Reid sent Walden away, only for his centre to be headed away by Davis.

O'ROURKE COMPLETES HIS HAT-TRICK

Then, the tension was relieved with another goal from O'Rourke. This youngster made no mistake when Whittaker sent him through with a shrewd pass after Morton had begun it, and the centre-forward left Hall

groping and helpless with a low drive.

After that the Town were able to contain fairly comfortably such raids as the Rovers mounted and there were one or two close things at the Rovers' end.

In the closing minutes, Rovers redoubled their efforts, but the Town defence, in confident frame of mind again, covered up well.

Result:

LUTON TOWN 4
BRISTOL ROVERS 2