

THIS SKELETON HAD A HEALTHY BODY

Reserves Helped Town To League Cup Progress

By CHILTERN

PORT VALE 0, LUTON TOWN 1

THAT skeleton team pitched into League Cup battle by the Town at Vale Park on Monday proved to have a very healthy body after all.

Only three members of the winning side at Oldham, McBain, McKechnie and Whittaker, were included and seven players who were in against Aldershot Reserves were drafted in.

Against all popular predictions, the Town made progress by a single goal and deservedly, because their ideas were more constructive than those of their opponents.

Port Vale took the opportunity to put in a couple of youngsters in attack, leaving experienced campaigners like Jackie Mudie and Albert Cheesebrough on the side-line, but, basically, this is the team that they hope will get them out of their present trouble.

Therefore, all the more credit to the Town, who quickly settled down to show strength in defence, smooth movement of the ball in midfield, but not a great deal of finishing power.

It was one of those dourly-fought matches in which the respective forward lines were contained, and as time went on, it became more and more apparent that the team to score first would be odds-on to qualify for the second round.

There was nothing in it at the start, but Vale began to take a grip, and Smith, a dangerous winger, sent a raking drive just over the bar.

When the Town came into it, Whittaker had a splendid shot well saved by Hancock, and McKechnie produced one of the best efforts of the match—a lightning drive from 30 yards that was just too high.

Towards half-time Vale began to exert pressure, with Smith, Mitchell and Poole going close, and Tinsley made a fine save from a free kick by Porter.

With six minutes of the second half gone, McKECHNIE, captain for the night, obtained the

vital goal from a pass by Whittaker. Hancock was deceived by the fact that the inside-right only half hit his shot, went the wrong way, and could only watch the ball roll in.

Shortly afterwards Riddick appeared to have made it safe with a well-placed drive, but his jubilation was short-lived when it was seen that the referee had disallowed the goal for offside.

For much of the rest of the time it was a story of frantic pressure by the home team, but they were all hustle and bustle, had no-one able to slow down the pace, and usually did not make much impression on the Town's defence.

All the same, Tinsley had ample opportunity of showing his considerable ability, and he made a series of excellent saves, including two at full-length from Mitchell.

In the closing minutes the Town came right back into it, and Riddick forced Hancock to pull the ball down from under the bar.

SOLID DEFENCE

In the circumstances this was a great performance by the Town, with its basis once again on solid defence.

Of the reserves in defence, Knights, hard in the tackle, impressed me most, but Riley had a successful match, and Caleb was in his usual rugged mood, which meant that he gave little away.

Both McBain and Jardine had their work cut out against a couple of fast-moving wingers, but mostly they were able to force them towards the touchline and so cut down the menace.

With Tinsley doing so well, Manager Bill Harvey must feel happy about his reserve defensive strength, should injuries to first team men occur.

In a match that was played at breakneck pace, Riddick was one of the few players on view with the ability to hold the ball, and he shone in the first half.

That Riddick has his critics I am well aware, but his showing before the interval set a couple of First Division clubs' representative talking, and what he needs most of all is an extra yard of pace.

For all that I made Whittaker the most consistent Town forward and would class 16-years-old Rioch's display as highly promising.

McKechnie had just a fair game, but Clarke had an unhappy time, though he did some useful work in defence when the pressure was on.

PORT VALE: Hancock; Alcock, Sproson; Rawlings, Nicholson, Miles; Rowlands, Poole, Mitchell, Porter, Smith.

LUTON TOWN: Tinsley; McBain, Jardine; Riley, Caleb, Knights; Clarke, McKechnie, Riddick, Rioch, Whittaker.

Referee: F. M. Nicholson, Manchester. Attendance: 5,111.