

Disappointing Show After O'Rourke Gives Them An Early Lead

By CHILTERN

LUTON TOWN 1, EXETER CITY 2

THERE was another brilliantly sunny afternoon for the Town's home match with Exeter City, making their first appearance at Kenilworth-road for over 25 years. And it was a striking appearance, because City appeared in vivid red shirts and shorts.

The Town, after their failure in front of goal on Wednesday, welcomed back John O'Rourke, now recovered from his ankle trouble. This was the only change, and Gordon Riddick, the man he displaced, went into the Reserve team to visit Charlton Reserves.

Exeter, promoted this season, have not found the going in Division III very smooth, but they contented themselves with one change, Peter Shearing taking over in goal from Alan Barnett.

Once again, the players had to contend with a hard ground and lively ball. The ground, in fact, was showing signs of wear and tear in places after the prolonged drought.

Before the kick-off, the Luton Band gave a spirited rendering of the Town's new theme song as written by the Manager and set to the tune of "Roll Out The Barrel".

Exeter had a mascot of much more mature age than is usual—he is 52—and he helped keep the crowd entertained before the start.

Pacey lost the toss and the Town were set to defend the Kenilworth-road end.

TOWN STRIKE QUICKLY

They were on the attack straight away, with both wing halves backing up strongly. They were driven off, and in a sharp Exeter break, Fincham came in firmly to make a clearance.

As it turned out, Baynham was first in action, not seriously, because he had little difficulty in coping with a header from right-winger Welsh after bright work by Rees.

Town pressure followed, with McKechnie prominent, and it was his persistence that nearly led to McDonald putting into his own goal, Shearing having to dive at the last second to prevent the ball crossing the line.

O'ROURKE IN THE PICTURE

Then O'Rourke flashed into picture to take a through pass by Reid, and the centre-forward looked a possible scorer until the ball struck Shearing on the legs and rebounded to safety.

Town had been very much on top, to the satisfaction of a crowd of about 10,000, many of whom were in shirt-sleeves.

A quick burst by the Town brought a terrific left-footed shot by O'Rourke that was clawed out by Shearing. Whittaker, showing good anticipation, followed up and headed wide of a post.

It was pretty much one-way traffic with the Town piling on the pressure, but tending to crowd each other out through over eagerness inside the penalty area.

Whittaker missed his kick when well positioned, and then, inevitably, the Town took the lead through O'ROURKE after nine minutes.

It was a cleverly taken goal, because O'Rourke had his back to the target when he received a long ball from McBain. He pivoted quickly before stroking the ball with his left foot to send it into the corner of the net well out of the reach of Shearing.

A half-chance fell to O'Rourke

from a pass by McKechnie, but he was unlucky in that the lively ball broke away from him as he turned towards goal.

Almost nothing was being seen

LUTON TOWN: Baynham; McBain, Bramwell; Pacey, Fincham, Lownds; Pleat, McKechnie, O'Rourke, Reid, Whittaker.

EXETER CITY: Shearing; Fulton, McDonald; Mitchell, Harvey, Anderson; Welsh, Curtis, Carter, Hancock, Rees.

Referee: N. C. Burtenshaw, Gt. Yarmouth.

of Exeter as an attacking force, but there was some improvement when Rees baffled McBain out near the touch-line, only for his low centre to be briskly punted clear by Fincham.

A warning that the Town could not afford to treat the Exeter forwards lightly at close quarters was sounded when Curtis flashed the ball into the net from an offside position, the whistle having been blown for a free-kick some seconds previously.

Town came back spiritedly and O'Rourke set Whittaker off with a precision pass. The winger closed in and shot, making Shearing go full stretch to get his finger-tips to the ball and divert it for a corner.

O'Rourke appeared to be obstructed when the ball came over, but there was no signal from the referee. In the next minute, Fincham was penalised for pushing Carter.

McKECHNIE CHECKED

A glorious pass by Reid gave McKechnie the chance to bore in towards goal, but his shot struck Harvey's legs, and that was the end of that particular effort.

Baynham, who had been much of a spectator, was brought into action by Rees, who was Exeter's most workmanlike forward so far.

Then it was Shearing's turn to be called upon when O'Rourke made a clever reverse pass to McKechnie, who streaked through from the inside-left position before unleashing a shot that the goalkeeper pulled down.

Play was still running the Town's way without the hoped-for punch in front of goal being produced, though there was more action in front of the Exeter goal when O'Rourke was obstructed and Whittaker's free kick was toe-ended over the bar for safety by centre-half Harvey.

Whittaker's corner came across accurately, but Shearing was able to collect the ball as O'Rourke

raced up and finished in the back of the net.

Pleat suddenly appeared on the left wing to collect a pass from Reid, and smacked in a pile-driver that Shearing parried and collected at the second attempt.

PENALTY APPEAL TURNED DOWN

O'Rourke was obstructed again, and yet another free kick came, this time just inside the penalty area. There were appeals for a penalty when a terrific shot by Pleat from Reid's free kick seemed to be handled by Anderson, but the referee would have none of it. Some excellent football in mid-field was coming from the Town who at times gave the appearance of almost toying with the opposition, but results were not coming in the shape of more goals.

Just once there was anxiety at the Town end when Welsh made an awkward sort of centre that was too far out for Baynham to reach, but McBain was there to head clear.

Another free-kick came to the Town when McKechnie was fouled in the centre circle by Anderson and had to receive attention to his right leg before



Back in the side again after his ankle injury, Town centre-forward celebrated with a smart goal after only nine minutes.

play could proceed.

A clever piece of work by O'Rourke in selling the dummy to Harvey brought Shearing into the picture again, and he had to dive to his left to cut off a cross-shot from the centre-forward.

Then there was trouble for the Town when Welsh beat both Bramwell and Fincham in a comparatively small space and went straight through the middle to finish with a shot that Baynham deflected with his foot for a corner, which was followed by another.

The Town were calling the tune, however, but without being able to produce the requisite finish to their commendable

approach work.

Just before half-time, Whittaker rounded Fulton to make a hard centre that Harvey diverted for a corner. This led to more activity in the Exeter goalmouth, but it ended when Bramwell made a hopeful long shot that Shearing caught easily. Half-time:

LUTON TOWN 1
EXETER CITY 0

Surprisingly, in view of what had gone before, Exeter began the second half on the attack. Rees who, with Welsh, had posed the only threat to the Town, caused the trouble with a low centre that Fincham despatched for a corner.

Back came the Town, with Pacey breaking right through before pulling the ball inside to Pleat, whose strong shot was kicked away by Anderson.

Without looking at all dangerous, Exeter were contriving to have a bigger share of the play than had been the case before the interval, and Fincham had to give away a corner to stop a thrust by Carter.

And this corner proved costly to the Town because Exeter equalised through CARTER. This was after 54 minutes.

Rees's flag kick came across unerringly, and as Baynham

CHAIRMAN ANSWERS THE FANS

LUTON TOWN F.C. have been criticised by supporters disgruntled because centre-forward John O'Rourke did not play against Port Vale on Wednesday after the published team had included him.

A statement authorised by the Chairman, Mr. Tom Hodgson, yesterday set out to clarify the position and to indicate that the club acted in good faith.

"The decision was left entirely to the player," it said. "At the last moment, he decided that his ankle injury would not allow him to do himself justice, and he also felt that he might let down his team-mates."

"The club doctor, manager and the trainer had thought him fit after tests."

"In fact, O'Rourke went so far as to start changing in the dressing room in readiness for the match before he decided that he ought to stand down."

shaped to collect it. Mitchell got his head to the ball and nudged it downwards. In a sudden scramble in front of goal, Carter hooked it into the net to put Exeter level unexpectedly.

TOWN AT PANIC STATIONS

In the next minute Town were at panic stations when Rees suddenly cleaved a way through, leaving McBain struggling. Baynham came out almost to the edge of the penalty area in an attempt to cut off the ball. He failed to do so, but his rush was effective by putting Rees off his aim so that he pulled the ball over a yard wide.

The Town's attack had gone into an almost complete decline, and not even their midfield build up, which had been so commendable earlier, was apparent now.

There was a short stoppage while Reid had attention for a leg injury which proved to be only slight. This was followed by a free-kick when McDonald fouled McKechnie, but again the Exeter defence covered up, and the ball was headed to safety. For the present, the Town had lost their grip after seeming to

How The Goals Came

O'ROURKE for Luton after 9 minutes.
CARTER for Exeter City after 54 minutes.
CURTIS for Exeter City after 76 mins.

have the game in their pockets, and they were not worrying the Exeter defence now.

Since their goal, Exeter had been playing with an assurance that they had never even hinted at before, and it was now the Town's turn to have something of a run around in defence.

In one of the visitors' raids, Fincham was injured, but he recovered quickly.

All the confidence the Town had shown in the first half seemed to have evaporated, and even their short passes were now going astray.

At last, Reid gave the crowd something to cheer about. He made a long run before passing to Whittaker and the winger flashed a low centre across goal. Pleat returned the ball, and Reid, meeting it first time, saw it canon off the feet of a defender standing on the goal-line.

This was almost the first really concerted attack by the Town this half, which by now was 20 minutes old.

Again the Town were refused a penalty when O'Rourke was checked after breaking through to a point blank scoring position. Just about nothing was going right for the Town in attack: passes were going anywhere but intended, and shots at goal were few.

There was nearly another goal for Exeter when Baynham went up to field a high punt by Welsh. As he did so Curtis charged him, so that the ball fell loose and rolled only inches wide of the post.

Exeter were looking the more dangerous, and Baynham had to take his courage in both hands and dive at the feet of Curtis to prevent further trouble.

EXETER IN THE LEAD

So much had the Town gone to pieces that it was not altogether surprising when they went into arrears in the 76th minute. CURTIS was the scorer.

It was Carter who made the goal possible. He gathered the ball in the inside-left position, flashing across a low centre that Baynham could not reach, and Curtis, rushing up at full speed, was left with the simple task of hitting the ball into the net.

It had certainly been an amazing turn around this half, with the Town completely out of touch and Exeter having improved immeasurably.

There was no sign of improvement from the Town, and after some initial falling back on defence by Exeter, the visitors came into the picture again for Rees to test Baynham.

CROWD BEGINS TO DWINDLE AWAY

The crowd on the terraces had diminished noticeably, and from the way things were going there did not seem much hope of a dramatic comeback by the Town. In fact, Exeter were looking extremely self-possessed in the middle of the field, where they had achieved domination this half.

In almost the last minute Reid sparked off a Town raid which ended with a centre by Whittaker going too high for O'Rourke.

Then, O'Rourke ran the ball out of play for a goal-kick as he chased it down the left-wing.

Result:
LUTON TOWN 1
EXETER 2