

WHAT THE OTHER CRITICS SAID

TOWN'S LATE RALLY SURPRISED READING

Won Match They Always Looked Like Losing

By CHILTERN

READING 1, LUTON TOWN 2

"Reading plunged to their first home defeat since March—and Luton, whose manager Bill Harvey resigned earlier in the day, scored their first win in 16 games.

"This form-baffling result was settled in five fantastic minutes as Luton, ineffectual for 80 minutes, suddenly sprang to life. Reading who led by Doug Webb's 44th minute goal had let countless chances slip by but they appeared to have little to worry about." — "News of the World."

"Luton, hovering near the foot of the table had an ineffective forward line yet, aided by poor marking, they brought two goals out of the bag in the 81st and 84th minutes to grab their first victory in 16 matches." — "Sunday Mirror."

"Luton players were on their way to Reading when they learned that manager Bill Harvey had resigned, and in the best romantic traditions this should be the story of how Luton played their hearts out to give him a farewell win—their first since September 5.

"But in fact Reading, well on top against a usually ineffective forward line, and a goal up with only 10 minutes to go, threw the game away to crash to their first home defeat since last Easter." — "The People."

"Reading suffered their first home defeat since March at the hands of the weakest looking side to visit Elm Park all season.

"For 80 minutes Luton were outplayed. They were behind by one goal, and it could easily have been six. Then in two minutes of inspired action, Luton scored twice." — "Sunday Telegraph."

ELEVEN minutes from time, the above score-line seemed a complete impossibility. A goal down, the Town seemed to be stumbling to the sort of away defeat that has been all too familiar to me over the past years.

There was little in their play to suggest that there could be a late rally and then it happened with dramatic and entirely unexpected suddenness.

As they had for the greater part of the match, Reading had been hammering away at the Town defence and then Lownds brought the ball through in decisive fashion.

Quickly, he pushed it to HARBER who, in only his third senior game, swung at it as Spiers challenged and it went in just inside the post, with Wilkie looking as if he had expected it to go wide.

This was the start of a remarkable turn around because, four minutes later, RIDDICK, at the far post, somehow manoeuvred with his head a lofted centre by Pleat into the net.

Reading had made the mistake of leaving the gaps in defence while trying to increase the narrow lead which WEBB had given them after 43 minutes.

Circumstances leading up to the goal the Town claimed were unlucky because, seconds before, they thought they should have had a corner when a shot by Bramwell appeared to be deflected inches wide of the post.

Instead it was a goal kick from which Terry found Webb, who beat Baynham with a great rising drive from just outside the penalty area.

TWO GOALS DISALLOWED

That Reading had not taken the lead earlier was due to a mixture of their propensity for being caught in the Town's offside trap—they had two goals disallowed for this reason—their own lack of decision in front of goal, and some dogged work by the Town defence.

In addition, Baynham, playing with all his own confidence, was dominating again inside the penalty area and cut out everything that came across from the wings.

Much of the second half was of the same pattern, with Reading threatening to add to their lead, but never quite getting there and they must have felt like kicking themselves heartily at the way in which the points slipped away from them.

It was a shabby sort of game, punctuated by far too many petty offences and by some bad temper that should have earned stronger action from the referee than incessant finger waving, which served to irritate everybody.

Until those last ten minutes, it was a case of the Town relying largely on the determination of their defence to keep them in with a chance, and again showing weakness in attack.

However, there was some excuse on this occasion because Whittaker pulled a groin muscle,

which cut down his effectiveness, and Reid strained his thigh, which meant that he spent three-quarters of the game at outside-right.

From there, he made an effective contribution, but his replacement at inside-left, Pleat, could not shake off the rugged tackling of the home defence and did not look at all happy.

In view of the lack of material of a workable kind that came his way and the close shadowing of Spiers, Riddick did as much as could have been expected.

Harber seems to have a clear idea of where the goal lies, but I would like to see him in a match in which the Town do not have to place so much accent on defence, before making judgment on him.

Apart from Baynham, the defensive stars were McBain and Bramwell, though Caleb improved after a highly tentative start, during which he was beaten on the turn by Terry.

Jardine was worried by the speed of Knight and the hard-working Lownds made some unpredictable mistakes but, after all, was the man who sparked off the Town rally.

READING: Wilkie; Walker, Meldrum; Norton, Spiers, Kerr; Knight, Shreeves, Terry, Webb, Travers.

LUTON TOWN: Baynham; McBain, Jardine; Lownds, Caleb, Bramwell; Pleat, Harber, Riddick, Reid, Whittaker.

Referee: G. T. Powell, Newport, Mon. Attendance: 7,420.