

DRAB TOWN WENT DOWN ONCE AGAIN

Southend Easier Winners Than Score Suggests

By CHILTERN

LUTON TOWN 0, SOUTHEND UNITED 1

CUP-TIE form of a fortnight before was confirmed at Kenilworth-road on Saturday, but not the result. Southend, deemed unlucky to lose the previous match, won a deal more comfortably than the score line would suggest to plunge the Town into deeper worry about the relegation bogey.

It was a game that provided little warmth for the smallest Saturday crowd of the season, 5,020, and which had lost its interest completely long before the end.

Until there is more action in the shape of goals, the crowds at Kenilworth-road will continue to dwindle and there was absolutely no promise at all of any prolific output by their attack.

Against a defence which is known to be suspect, the forwards made scarcely any headway and it was left to the 17-years-old Rioch, making his senior debut, to leave the greatest mark on this drab game, from the Town point of view.

At least, he took on the somewhat unaccustomed task of outside-left in efficient style, refusing, quite rightly, to be too ambitious and his use of the ball was something of an object lesson for more experienced members of the front line.

Unfortunately, this was another drab display by the Town with the number of misplaced passes far exceeding what should be the normal quota.

There was little build-up from midfield, just about as much use of the open spaces and, in the main, far too much waiting for the ball to arrive, instead of going in to meet it.

In the main, Southend made a pretty shrewd assessment of the situation, but they rather overestimated the ability of the Town through falling back on spoiling tactics in the second half.

There was really no need for the pass back to the goalkeeper of something like half the length of the field because the Town did not threaten much to wipe out their arrears.

COULD HAVE WON MORE EASILY

Indeed, had Southend made real use of their chances, they could have won by a substantial margin but, Bentley, Smillie, Gilfillan and Smith all missed from close range.

SMILLIE, however, proved to be the match-winner in the 18th minute when from about two yards outside the penalty area, he ran on to a pass from Bradbury and his rising shot beat Baynham's desperate leap.

Just about the only worth-while efforts by the Town in the first half came from Riddick, who also missed a good chance after the interval, when the best attempt was made by Rioch, who forced McKechnie to pounce quickly on the ball at the foot of the near post.

It was the sort of display that was not calculated to win the Town many friends, because the

forward line showed a stodgy, unimaginative approach.

Man who could have lifted it out of the rut, Reid, continued in his bad patch, and Harber's inexperience was more marked than in his previous outings.

RIDDICK WELL HELD

Riddick showed a constructive approach, but, closely marked by Watson and lacking anything in the nature of support, could not be expected to produce more than he did.

Which left Pleat, whose presence was in doubt until a late hour because of a heavy cold, and he made things difficult for himself by running into trouble consistently.

While there was some creaking in defence, much of it could be forgiven in view of the weakness of the men in front of them, and they are facing an unenviable task each match through knowing that the conceding of only one goal can be fatal.

Caleb, who was dazed in the second half, did a workmanlike sort of job and no-one could fault Lownds or Bramwell on the score of effort, though a little more constructive skill would have been welcome.

There was something of a run-around for McBain from McKinven, Southend's most dangerous forward, but Jardine coped more ably with Slater than he did in the Cup-tie.

There was a suspicion that Baynham was guilty of an error of judgment when the goal was scored, but otherwise he did a highly competent job.

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

SOUTHEND UNITED: McKechnie; Costello, Neal, Bentley, Watson, Bradbury; Slater, Smillie, Smith, Gilfillan, McKinven.

Referee: K. H. Burns, Dudley.