

WHAT THE OTHER CRITICS SAID

WORKMANLIKE TOWN DID A GREAT JOB

Solid foundation was provided by the defence

By CHILTERN

PORT VALE 1, LUTON TOWN 2

"Luton continued their march towards better times with a fine 2-1 win at Port Vale. They have now gone six games without defeat."

"With team spirit sky-high, Luton now look a good bet for promotion." — "Daily Mirror".

"Luton were convinced that something would turn up. And when it did—twice—they were ready to exploit their good fortune."

"Jimmy Hill, playing his first game since signing from Everton, and player-manager Jackie Mudie did their best to bring order to the high-spirited chaos that reigned whenever Vale approached goal. But their contributions were drained away by the finishing of promising moves, poor shooting and superb goal-keeping by Colin Tinsley."

"Set against this was the polished approach of Luton though content for the most part with a defensive posture, their smooth running attack always had a hint of menace." — "Sunday Express".

"Luton Town on Saturday completed their sixth game without defeat, but for 45 minutes they scarcely looked like continuing this successful sequence. That they were able to speak volumes for the brilliance of Tinsley in goal. He defied all the efforts of a lively Vale attack to break through." — "Sunday Telegraph".

"Port Vale crashed to their first home defeat of the season in a match they should have had safely sewn up by the interval."

"In the first 45 minutes, with new boy Jimmy Hill sparkling, they were the undisputed masters. But they just couldn't get past Luton's brilliant young goalkeeper Colin Tinsley." — "Sunday Mirror".

"A superb display by goalkeeper Colin Tinsley foiled a first-half Port Vale bombardment and then the home side crumbled away when left-half Roy Sproson cut an eye in a heading duel with John O'Rourke and did not appear after the interval." — "News of the World".

RIGHTLY, this match was regarded by manager George Martin as one of vital importance in the immediate future of the Town club, and the team approached it not only responsibly, but in workmanlike fashion, which spoke volumes for the way in which they have settled down as a unit.

This was no flashy, brilliant display, but rather a solid one in which perhaps the most encouraging feature was the way in which the defence, which has not always been above criticism, got down to the task.

Their close marking, hard tackling and splendid covering enabled the team to weather a none too easy first half in which the Vale, unbeaten at home hitherto, had more of the play and, indubitably, the better scoring chances.

That they did not make the most of their opportunities is not the crux of the matter so far as the Town are concerned. What did stand out was that the gaps, particularly down the middle, which have tended to occur recently, were firmly plugged.

And when the Vale did find a way through, there was always Tinsley, in his most confident form, to foil them with his fine anticipation and his clean handling of the ball.

From the way in which things went, the Town could be satisfied at being all square at half-time, especially as their forwards had not achieved the smoothness they have been showing in home matches.

Partly, this could have been due to the difficulty posed by a greasy surface and a tricky wind which made accurate passing a chancy business.

QUICK REWARD FOR TOWN

Interval instructions were to keep the ball low and to keep it moving in order to pull apart the sound home defence and there was a quick pay-off two minutes after the re-start.

A pass by French sent O'Rourke racing through and, from near the dead-line, he pulled the ball back for WHITTAKER to crash it into the net with the defence all over the place.

That lead could have been short-lived because the Vale made a prompt reply and Mudie, with great deliberation,

headed to Tinsley's left a centre by Smith, but the goalkeeper made a great save.

After that, Vale, who began the second half with Richards substituting for Sproson, always looked to be on the losing end, even more so when after 68 minutes, O'ROURKE put the Town further ahead after Read had headed in a corner by Fry.

One or two other chances slipped away, but there was no danger to the Town's superiority until three minutes from the end when HILL scored from Taylor's cross, but it was too late for them to salvage anything.

EXCELLENT WORK BY DEFENCE

It was good to see the defence in such excellent form and it had a solid foundation of a strong half-back line in which Reid and Moore took command of the middle of the field and Rivers dominated as he did when he first came into the side.

Behind them, Thomson and Jardine were both strong and resourceful and the whole performance was most encouraging.

The best was not seen of the attack before the interval, but they settled down afterwards, with Whittaker and O'Rourke spearheading several dangerous raids.

Read did a tremendous amount of useful work, Fry improved on a slow start to use the ball well and French, despite close marking, was always a source of trouble to the Vale left flank, with his cleverness.

PORT VALE: O'Neill; Miles, Wilson; Poole, Alcock, Sproson (Richards); Smith, Mudie, Rowland, Hill, Taylor.

LUTON TOWN: Tinsley; Thomson, Jardine; Reid, Rivers, Moore; French, Read, O'Rourke, Fry, Whittaker. Substitute: Gibson.

Referee: G. Martin, Whitechurch, Hants. Attendance: 6,058.