

RAMPANT TOWN SURGE ON INTO THE PROMOTION HUNT

Halifax routed despite injury to French

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By CHILTERN

LUTON TOWN 4, HALIFAX TOWN 1

ON a fine, sunny, crisp afternoon there was no real evidence of the bumper attendance that the Town were hoping for at Kenilworth Road—and which they deserved as reward for their recent endeavours.

At the same time, it must be said that Halifax Town, today's visitors, are scarcely much of an attraction. With so many northern clubs of somewhat mediocre standing in this division, the Town have to rely almost entirely on their own local resources for support.

There was quite an encouraging surge on to the terraces five minutes before kick-off time, which rather suggested that the last gate figures, the biggest of the season, might be exceeded, if only marginally.

There was no late change by either team, and the only alteration made by the Town compared with the team beaten at Tranmere on Wednesday was at centre-half.

How the goals came

MOORE for Luton after 10 minutes
O'ROURKE for Luton after 26 minutes
WHITTAKER for Luton after 61 minutes
READ for Luton after 78 minutes
BALMER for Halifax after 86 minutes

where the vastly more experienced Matt Woods was brought back, to the exclusion of Alan Rivers, who became the substitute.

In view of the Cup-tie next Saturday, the return of Woods was interesting, to say the least. He has been absent from the first team since August 28.

Halifax, who last week accomplished their best performance of the season by beating Rochdale 4-1, contented themselves by switching their wing halves, though what was behind this was difficult to fathom.

Reid won the toss and



MOORE
Town left-half, hit a spectacular goal to open the scoring after 10 minutes.

elected to defend the Oak Road end, which set Halifax to face the sun.

TOWN SWING INTO ATTACK

In the first minute, the Town swung to the attack, with Whittaker cleverly beating Russell before pulling the ball low into the goalmouth. Read was awkwardly placed, but put it back to Reid, who shot from the edge of the penalty area for a corner,

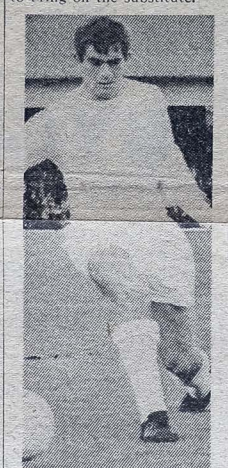
and the close proximity of Read, gave away a corner. It was followed by another as the goalkeeper pushed out a header from O'Rourke.

The referee had a word with Lee after a foul on French, and the free kick led to another corner for the Town. This type of award was not producing much, however, and Halifax were certainly covering up with some ability.

Obstruction by Moore on Taylor brought Halifax a free k'k, which Tinsley dealt with easily.

FRENCH GOES OFF THE FIELD

Still feeling the effects of his earlier injury, French went off the field for further attention from trainer Charlie Watkins after 23 minutes, but there was no immediate move to bring on the substitute.



O'ROURKE increased the Town's lead with a brilliant header after 26 minutes.

The winger seemed to be in considerable pain.

Even though they were reduced to 11 men, the Town went on to the attack again and Reid shot over from long range.

Then, manager George Martin joined French and Watkins, and the manager, after a glance at the player, signalled to the stand for the assistance of the club doctor,

TEAMS

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

HALIFAX TOWN: Raynor, Russell, Brier, Smith, Pickering, Lee, Taylor, Atkins, Balmer, McMillan, Fidler. Substitute, Clarke.
Referee, Mr. H. J. New, of Portsmouth.

and took French to the dressing room.

Rivers, the substitute, followed them, no doubt to ask for instructions.

Meanwhile, down to ten men, the Town increased their lead through O'ROURKE, who went up brilliantly to a corner by Whittaker and beat the groping hands of Raynor to head the ball squarely into the back of the net after 26 minutes. Before play could be resumed, there was attention for Raynor, who was hurt in the clash.

Even though they were still depleted, the Town had the better of matters, and Fry was unlucky with a shot that rose inches too high.

FRENCH COMES BACK ON THE FIELD

Then, the wisdom of not rushing on a substitute became clear when, after five minutes' absence, French returned, although he was still carrying his left arm gingerly.

A chance fell to O'Rourke when sent through, but Raynor narrowed the angle, and the centre-forward's shot hit him and was scumbled away.

Another stoppage came when Moore was injured, but he was soon all right again, and so Rivers still remained track-suited on the trainers' bench.

Read was the next Town player in the wars. The game was producing a lot of niggling and obviously painful fouls. Read, in fact, came off the field to have attention to his right leg, so once again the Town were down to ten men.

Then things went wrong for them when they stood to appeal for an offside decision that never came and there was a ticklish period in front of goal before Town conceded a corner.

BRIGHT EFFORT FOR HALIFAX

Halifax very nearly got back into the game from the kick, for Balmer made a brilliant effort, throwing himself at the ball, and Tinsley only just managed to push it over the bar. From the next corner, he saved from Atkins.

Read returned, but Halifax had the Town defence in some trouble, particularly when Woods missed completely a centre by Fidler, but all Taylor could do was to turn

the ball to Thomson, who cleared.

Even though the Town were two up, this display had none of the sparkle of recent form, though regard had to be paid to the fact that French's effectiveness had been badly cut down, and that Halifax were tackling sternly, to say the least.

Just on half-time, Tinsley, in confident frame of mind, pulled down a centre brilliantly, but the Town had allowed Halifax to get back in the game. Half-time:

LUTON TOWN 2
HALIFAX TOWN 0

During the interval, it was decided that French was not fit enough to continue, because of a badly bruised arm, and also because of concussion, which affected him considerably.

Rivers was pressed into service in what amounted to a dual spearhead with O'Rourke, and Read switching to outside-right.

The alteration did not seem to bother the Town, because they went on to the attack from the start of the second half, with Whittaker prominent. From one of his centres, Rivers swung on to the ball, but only half hit it, though Raynor was hard pressed to save at full stretch.

The Town continued to do the pressing, and gained a free kick for a foul on Rivers, but again this was wasted material, because Reid sliced it yards wide of goal.

TOWN DEFENCE CAUGHT AT SEA

In a sudden Halifax burst, the Town defence was caught all at sea. The trouble began when Reid failed to stop Fidler. The winger sent the ball right across to Taylor, who headed it firmly into the goalmouth. It was as well for the Town that Woods was well positioned, enabling him to head clear.

At this stage, the Town defence was having problems.

Apart from the dislocation caused by French's absence, Read was limping quite heavily from his earlier injury.

Even so, there might have been another goal for Town,

but for the agility of Raynor, who dived full stretch to catch a header from O'Rourke. It was a worthy attempt by the centre-forward. Halifax were having to keep a wary eye on him, but he was not having the best of service.

THIRD GOAL FOR THE TOWN

Raynor was deserving well of his side, because he made another great save, from a first-time drive by Read, and Rivers was spoken to by the referee for an over-enthusiastic challenge on the goalkeeper as he came down.

Despite their troubles, the Town were still superior, and it was no more than their due when they got their third goal after 61 minutes.

WHITTAKER was the scorer, and a glorious goal it was, from just about the corner of the penalty area. He picked up a loose clearance by Smith and let go a beautiful drive that rose unerringly and



finally went into the net off the inside of the far post. Raynor was completely beaten on this occasion.

Halifax kept pegging away without causing Town a lot of trouble, although there might have been some when Woods doggedly followed Taylor out to the wing and then pulled him down. Tinsley again showed his class by pulling down the winger's drive down with complete confidence from under the bar.

Tinsley was again in action to deal with a long shot by Pickering, who had gone up for a corner.

Rivers was now at outside-right, with Read in his original position.

Rivers came into the picture, avoiding a chopping

tackle cleverly, only to spoil the effect with an inaccurate pass.

Whittaker nearly produced a carbon copy of his goal with a shot from a bit longer range, and from almost the same angle. He beat Raynor, but the ball dropped on the wrong side of the bar.

Then after 78 minutes, Town got the fourth, through READ, with a header from a centre by Rivers.

There was a threat at the Town end when Thomson was too ambitious in front of his own goal, but got out of it with no trouble in the end.

Woods might have put into his own goal when slicing a clearance, but Tinsley saved.

In the next minute, the Town appealed for a penalty when O'Rourke was brought down, the referee would have none of it.

Halifax were still fighting, and it needed a point blank save by Tinsley from Lee to end the danger.

O'Rourke was again in the picture when he snapped on to a pass by Whittaker and shot wide as he clashed with Smith. O'Rourke went down like a ton of bricks.

There was some milling around after this, and the referee intervened, spoke to the right-half, and it ended amicably with the two players shaking hands.

HALIFAX OPEN THEIR ACCOUNT

Then in a breakaway Halifax scored through BALMER after 86 minutes after Fidler had gone through unopposed and Tinsley had pushed out his shot one-handed. Balmer ran on to it and it rebounded into the net.

Town struck back from a long free-kick, and Raynor appeared to be forced over the line, but the referee was on the spot and refused Town's claims for a goal.

The Town were still looking for more goals, but O'Rourke was pushed heavily off the ball as he went goalwards.

With barely a minute left, the Town had a free kick eight yards outside the penalty area. The ball was pushed to Read, but he was too slow to get in a shot. Result:

LUTON TOWN 4
HALIFAX TOWN 1