

O'ROURKE'S HEADER PROVED DECISIVE

Best crowd of season saw typical cup-tie

By CHILTERN

65/66
(FAC)

LUTON TOWN 1, ROMFORD 0

ONCE John O'Rourke found the goal trail which he had been probing unsuccessfully for so long, there was no doubt about the Town qualifying for the second round trip to Corby as the result of this replay at Kenilworth Road on Thursday.

The vital goal came in the 66th minute when Tony Read again underlined his effectiveness as a key member of the attack by laying on the pass from which O'Rourke deftly flicked the ball with his head past the gallant Earl.

This was the culmination of some hectic Town pressure which began immediately after the interval during which I suspect that Manager George Martin had some pertinent words to say on the subject of the first half display.

During that period, Romford after some early sparkle by the Town during which Whittaker might easily have snatched an early lead, had certainly given a good account of themselves.

Playing straightforward, hard football, they had the Town defence in trouble several times and actually created for themselves the better chances.

Tapping, Sanders, Obeney and Barnett all went close to giving them what would have been a sensational lead, but the Town had their chances, too, and, in particular, O'Rourke and Gibson missed reasonable opportunities.

Towards half time, the way in which Romford were racing back to pack their penalty area perhaps indicated that the tide was beginning to turn, and the cracking pace to tell.

From the start of the second half, the Town piled on pressure and in quick succession, Earl saved splendidly from O'Rourke, Read and Whittaker while Read headed against the bar from a corner by Harber.

By now, Romford had been

reduced to snap breakaways in which they gained two corners in quick succession, but the Town were in full cry now and then came the decisive goal from O'Rourke which, for a time, looked as if it might be followed by others.

On a night of queer decisions by the referee, none was more strange than the one he gave against Gibson who appeared to be pushed blatantly in the penalty area and the Town players averred afterwards that they should have had a penalty.

To their credit, Romford never gave up the fight, but the only real anxiety came in the last minute when Edwards handled just outside the penalty area and Tapping provided the anti-climax by shooting over.

BRUISING ENCOUNTER

For the season's best crowd of 11,061, this was real cup-tie stuff, hard, fast and often tough. In fact, it was a bruising encounter with the tackling often coming into the uninhibited category and it was obvious that some of the feuds that developed on Saturday were being continued.

At times more drastic action than was taken was surely necessary, but the referee contented himself with booking the name of Kelly, though he handed out several verbal cautions.

This was not the smooth Town who have been steam-rollering their way in home victories in League matches, but they had to suit their play to the pattern of things.

It would be churlish to award less than full marks to the defence for the way in which they stood up to pressure, with Thomson, Woods and Moore outstanding, in which category Reid would have come had his distribution been more accurate.

Edwards had a worrying first half against the speedy

Sanders, but came to terms with himself afterwards when he marked the winger more closely and this particular gap was closed up effectively.

Tinsley, in the face of a buffeting, made some fine saves and the defence, as a whole, stood up to a difficult task well.

Again, O'Rourke found the close marking of White difficult to shake off, was caught in possession more than is usual but, at the same time, he always represented a source of danger, as did Whittaker with his piercing runs.

Certainly, Harber was an improvement on the right wing where he played courageously, Read was always harassing the Romford defence, but Gibson, in yet another position, though he worked hard, could scarcely be said to have fitted in.

LUTON TOWN: Tinsley; Thomson, Edwards; Reid, Woods, Moore; Harber, Read (A), O'Rourke, Gibson, Whittaker.

ROMFORD: Earl; Read (J), Harris; Reed, White, Gibbs; Sanders, Obeney, Kelly, Tapping, Barnett.

Referee: R. A. Paine, Southall.