

CITY SLICKERS SURPRISE TOWN AND STEAL THE POINTS

Chances go begging in exciting muddy battle

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By CHILTERN

LUTON TOWN 2, BRADFORD CITY 3

LUTON TOWN found themselves bogged down in the mud against Bradford City at Kenilworth Road this afternoon, and were surprised as City twice held the lead. City led 2-1 at the interval.

City increased their grip on the game soon after the restart, and it needed a brilliant goal by Bruce Rioch to put Town back into the game with a chance.

Considering the volume of rain there has been these last few days, the pitch was in reasonable condition.

Obviously, it was going to cut up, but at least there was never any question of the match being put off.

Yet, during the morning and early afternoon, the club's offices were bombarded with phone calls asking if the match was still on.

The early indications were that the attendance would be below average, though this is

TEAMS

LUTON TOWN: Tinsley; Thomson, Jardine; Riddick, Woods, Rioch; Pleat, Read, O'Rourke, Stark, Whittaker. Substitutes: Moore.

BRADFORD CITY: Wood; Ingle, Cooper, Stowell, Fox, Ellam; Hall, Hannah, Rodon, Leek, Thorpe. Substitute: Newton.

Referee: E. T. Jennings, Stourbridge.

usual on the last Saturday before Christmas.

The Town, badly needing a tonic victory, had three changes compared with the team beaten at Stockport last Friday. Both wing halves, were out, John Reid because of some knee ligament trouble and John Moore for loss of form.

In their places came two players who until a few weeks ago were regarded primarily as inside forwards. Gordon Riddick, who was at right half, has had some varied experience in defensive positions this season, while Bruce Rioch has come to the fore at left-half during the last fortnight.

With Graham French still feeling the effects of the knock he received last week, Billy Stark came in at inside-left.

BRADFORD CITY PLAY UNCHANGED SIDE

On the other hand, Bradford City, currently bottom of the League, but with some experienced players in their midst, retained the team that beat Newport last Saturday for its first victory in eight matches.

In the absence of Reid, Matt Woods captained the Town, lost the toss, and was set to defend the Kenilworth Road end.

After an initial Luton attack, Town were in trouble. Thomson got himself tangled up in challenging Thorpe, from whose centre Tinsley, looking badly placed, somehow skidded his way across the goalmouth to save a header from Hall.

Straight from this, the Town broke away through Whittaker, and when he centred Read tried hard to force the ball home from close range, but found himself smothered out by Fox.

Conditions were now seen to be far from easy. The pitch was sticky and the ball was not moving with any facility.

TWO GOOD MOVES GO TO WASTE

Two good moves by the Town went to waste through the ball going behind, first from Read and then from Stark, from almost identical positions.

There was a perilous moment for Bradford when Cooper made a pass back to Wood, Read coming very close to intercepting. He was beaten

started, but Town, encouraged by their goal, swept into the attack again.

Stark was pulled down from behind, not far outside the penalty area, and the free kick taken by Read, brought yet another full-length save from Wood, who by now was plastered with mud from head to foot.

Again O'Rourke was quick in following up, but again he missed the final rebound, sending the ball wide of the post.

Then, Whittaker got annoyed at not getting a decision for a corner in his favour. He flung the ball down in disgust, and received a telling off from the referee as a result.

Fouls were quite frequent, possibly because of the state of the going. O'Rourke had his legs whipped from under him by Fox, and also received a word from the referee, apparently because of something he said.

The free kick was taken somewhat aimlessly by O'Rourke, but even so Wood again had to go full-length in the mud to save.

CITY GO IN FRONT AGAIN

There was a difficult task for Tinsley in knocking up into the air a hard drive by Thorpe, and then, in a quick reprisal raid, O'Rourke finished in the back of the net without the ball, as Wood punched away a centre from Whittaker.

Again, Tinsley was in action, having moved quickly across his goal to cut out a centre by Hall as Rodon raced in to challenge.

He was beaten for the second time in the 40th minute by LEEK, who smashed in the ball from the inside-right position between the goalkeeper and the near post after their had been some faltering in defence, particularly by Jardine, after Stowell had pushed the ball through.

Certainly, the Town should not have been in this situation. They had not made the best use of their chances, and, as an illustration of this, O'Rourke, admittedly from an angle, sliced the ball badly behind with his left foot.

Another foul on O'Rourke, this time by Leek, brought the Town a free kick which the City's packed defence cleared without trouble. Then, for once, City's outside trap was sprung by Whittaker, whose fierce centre was missed by the onrushing Read, and it cannoned off Cooper for a corner.

Bradford were obviously intent on retaining their lead at least until the interval, because they now had 10 players funnelled back in defence. Half-time.

**LUTON TOWN 1
BRADFORD CITY 2**

A good movement, which O'Rourke and Pleat co-operated might have brought



Within a minute of Bradford City taking the lead through Leek, Town inside-right Tony Read levelled the scores.

an equaliser, but in the end Riddick's effort — worthy enough from longish range — sailed narrowly wide.

Meanwhile, this City team, looking a much smarter formation than their lowly League position would suggest, were always dangerous when they broke away.

It required a fine diving save by Tinsley to keep out a header by Leek, who had to have some attention before the resulting corner kick could be taken.

ANOTHER GOAL FOR CITY

Town fell further into arrears after 49 minutes, when the RODOON scored following a superlative effort by Ellam.

The left-half brought the ball through fully 40 yards, beating three defenders in the process and underlining the lack of close marking in this Town defence.

When he had reached a range from which he might profitably have shot, he pushed the ball to Rodon, who beat Tinsley as the goalkeeper scrambled desperately on all fours.

City were looking more dangerous now than the Town, despite a shot on the volley by Stark that flew too high, and Thorpe might have increased the Bradford lead when he was left with a good chance close in. Somehow Tinsley managed to claw the ball down.

BRILLIANT GOAL BY RIOCH

Then, after 55 minutes, the Town got back into the game in dramatic fashion through RIOCH, who gathered a loose ball after Stark had made some ground, took it in his stride, made a bee-line for goal to leave Wood helpless with a terrific left-footed drive.

Town, spurred on by this success, attacked again. Pleat made a brilliant run down the wing and finished with a centre that Stark headed inches too high.

There was increasing danger from Bradford when they broke away, and when Woods slipped in the mud Rodon made a lot of ground. Another

chance fell to Thorpe but his shot hit Rioch, as the left-half rushed back, and the ball went for a corner.

PENALTY APPEAL TURNED DOWN

Back came the Town, but their appeals for a penalty went unheeded when Stark was bundled over unceremoniously.

If the football was not of a high quality, there was plenty of excitement as the Town fought to reach equality again.

Wood acquired another coating of mud in slithering full-length to keep out a long-range effort by Rioch, and there were cheers from the crowd when finally the ball was worked out to Pleat, who had looked Town's most dangerous forward potentially, but Read wasted the winger's work through slowness.

There should have been a goal to the Town after Whittaker had shown tenacity and determination in rushing his way past Ingle, but when O'Rourke swung at the ball he failed to get any force behind it.

SPELL OF CITY PRESSURE

There followed a spell of Bradford pressure, during which Woods extricated the Town from a desperately sticky situation by coming out with the ball after Thorpe had centred dangerously.

From this, O'Rourke gained a corner, well placed by Whittaker, and Riddick, well up in the goalmouth, very nearly forced the ball over the line, but Wood got his body behind it and also took the force of the kick, too, so there was a hold-up while he received attention.

There was not really a distinct sign that the Town would equalise. In fact, the more great was coming from the City, and Thorpe made a headed clearance in acrobatic style to keep out a shot by Thorpe.

TOWN BECOMING BOGGED DOWN

The Town tended to become bogged down in the mud in midfield. There was quite considerable difficulty in dragging the ball through this morass. The lesson that should have been learned by now, however, was that there was not much future in playing that way.

Ten minutes were left now, and the Town's raids were becoming less frequent and not carrying much promise either.

Rioch now moved up to inside-right, Stark fell back to left-half, and Read went to inside left in a desperate bid by Town to effect some improvement.

NEARLY ANOTHER GOAL FOR CITY

Meanwhile, the City were prospering, and they very nearly had another goal when Thorpe squared the ball to Leek. The inside-left thumped it good and hard, Tinsley went full-length without completing the save, and the dependable Woods came to the rescue again.

Then came what looked like

relieve for the Town when O'Rourke broke clean through, only to be foiled by Wood throwing himself to his left and making another great save, though whether he should have been given the scope to do so is another matter.

BACK TO THE ORIGINAL LINE-UP

Now, it was a bit difficult to fathom who was playing where for the Town, and then it became clear that they had reverted to their original formation.

At last, O'Rourke got the ball into the net from a free



Left-half Bruce Rioch improved Town's chances with a brilliant goal scored after 55 minutes.

kick by Woods, but it was a false hope, because he was penalised for offside.

Hope had just about gone now, because the Town just were not playing well enough, or perhaps it was that the City were playing too well.

Certainly, City were leaving no gaps, though there was very nearly a goal for Town in almost the last minute when Stark pushed the ball in the direction of O'Rourke, from whose feet the ball was whipped away by Wood. Result.

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