

TWO QUICK GOALS RUINED TOWN'S BID

A brace by Whittaker not enough at Southport

By CHILTERN

SOUTHPORT 3, LUTON TOWN 2

TWO goals in three minutes midway through the second half sank the Town's hopes of ending their recent poor run by obtaining a point, at least, against the much-improved Southport team at Haig Avenue on Monday.

At that stage, they looked as if they had tamed the lively home forwards, but a free kick against Riddick changed the whole situation.

Not that he could be blamed unduly because fouls were not only frequent, but almost impossible to avoid committing on the very difficult going presented by the frozen turf.

In fact, when the Town arrived at the ground an hour before the kick-off, it was to be met with the news that the match was not certain to be on, and that the referee had not made up his mind.

Main trouble was the rutted condition of the turf in parts, but these were liberally covered with sand and the referee then allowed the gates to be opened.

Considering the state of the pitch which made turning quickly an almost impossible business and led to players slipping and sliding all over the place, there was good entertainment for Southport's biggest League crowd of the season, 6,638.

But back to the free-kick that really put the home team on to the path for two points after they had lost the advantage of an early goal.

SPECTACULAR GOAL

Playing at full-back for the first time in a League match, Riddick went in to tackle Peat who went down in a heap. The kick was placed plumb into the goalmouth and ALTY changed the direction of the ball with his head completely and it went in for a spectacular goal.

That made it 2-1, and before the Town had time to recover from the shock, the ball was in their net again, this time as a direct result of waiting for an off-side decision that never came.

Smith went on through the resultant gap, drew Tinsley out of his goal and SPENCE was left with the easiest of chances from close range.

That seemed to settle the Town's hopes because, despite the difficulty facing defenders, their forwards had not shown sufficient punch to suggest that they could wipe out that lead.

WHITTAKER THEN HIT BACK

However, WHITTAKER, who was easily the most consistent and thrustful of the front line, brought renewed hope 14 minutes from the end.

For once, O'Rourke managed to get clear of opposition, made a long run down the left-wing, and Whittaker came racing in to stab his low centre past Reeves.

However, the Town could not find the power to secure an equaliser, and their best chance went when Fry shot wide following a free-kick by Woods.

At the outset, Southport were the quicker to settle down to the conditions, and they became a goal up in seven minutes when Marshall retrieved a ball that seemed to be going out after the bounce had beaten him initially and RUSSELL, moving in to meet the centre, guided it with his head between Tinsley and the near post.

Without being able to mount really persistent pressure, the Town had quite a lot of the ball in midfield, and O'Rourke should have equalised when he headed too high, while Whittaker, not getting full force behind his shot, saw it deflected by Molyneux with Reeves out of position.

In the meantime, Southport looked the more dangerous, and Tinsley made a smart save from Marshall, who caused quite a lot of trouble.

There were three minutes of the first half left when the Town equalised. French, who had been very quiet, suddenly began a run that took him past two opponents and, from in front of goal, WHITTAKER slammed the ball into the roof of the net, narrowly squeezing it under the bar.

Considering the difficulties which they faced, the defence did not do at all badly, with Woods again their strong man and standing out with his coolness and his ability to read the game.

BIG SUCCESS

And sharing main honours with the oldest member of the team, was the youngest, Rioch, having only his second senior outing at left-half.

Coming in to meet the ball strongly and tackling hard, he was an unqualified success and, on this form, has come to stay.

Reid, I thought, provided a most effective midfield link, specially in the first half, even though his distribution was not all it might have been, but his ability to cover was always of value.

Riddick's display I would place in the promising category, and he seemed to be able to combat the conditions more successfully than did Jardine, who was given a harassing time by Marshall, though he gains full marks for maximum effort.

Except for Whittaker, the forward line was largely disappointing, with Fry and Harber not accomplishing a great deal in the inside positions, and O'Rourke again pretty effectively blotted out. Three fine bursts by French gave an indication of the ability of this player but, other than that, he was little in the game.

SOUTHPORT. — Reeves; Parker, Cairns; Peat, Molyneux, Barratt; Marshall, Spence, Alty, Russell, Smith.

LUTON TOWN. — Tinsley; Riddick, Jardine; Reid, Woods, Rioch; French, Fry, O'Rourke, Harber, Whittaker.

Referee: D. N. H. Payne, Sheffield.