

O'ROURKE GETS TWO QUICK GOALS TO

BREAK STALEMATE

Then shock goal puts visitors back in game

By CHILTERN

LUTON TOWN 2, HARTLEPOOLS 1

TWO brilliantly-taken goals in the space of seven minutes just after the interval by John O'Rourke broke what had seemed a stalemate in the Town's game with Hartlepoons at Kenilworth Road this afternoon.

The Town began to assert their superiority, but were shocked when Hartlepoons, who had not looked like getting back into the game, showed more life in attack and scored through Thompson.

After the rain this week, and the fact that the school-boys' match on Wednesday seriously cut up the surface, the Kenilworth Road pitch was at its heaviest this season.

All down the middle the texture of the pitch indicated deep waterlogging extending right into the penalty areas, and the goal areas had been heavily sanded.

It did not look like being a day for the subtleties of football, but one when directness and forthrightness would prevail.

For the fifth consecutive match the Town fielded the same team, with Jardine having recovered from the muscle injury that caused him to miss the second half last Saturday.

At the same time manager George Martin took no chances about him breaking down again, because he nominated full-back Bobbie Thomson as substitute.

After their 4-2 win over Wrexham last Saturday, Hartlepoons announced an unchanged team.

Generally speaking, it was a pretty miserable sort of afternoon. It was drizzling before the start, but even so the crowd looked as if it might approach the recent average.

Hartlepoons won the toss and chose to defend what was likely to be the heavier Oak Road end. From the start the Town attacked, with Moore finding O'Rourke who beat the offside trap and brought the ball back to Rioch. But he did not steady himself when left with a reasonable chance, and the ball went much too high.

Next Riddick came into the picture with a dazzling dribble deep into the Hartlepoons half. But his pass was wasted by Read, who put the ball into a ruck of opposing players.

TOWN UNLUCKY NOT TO LEAD

Certainly the Town were clearly superior in these opening minutes, and were unlucky not to go ahead when Read came in to meet a pass by Whittaker, but he headed inches wide of the post with Green beaten.

A long run by Whittaker, who beat two opponents and was stopped only at the expense of a corner, put the Town on the attack again, and Hartlepoons were lucky when Read met a cross with his head and Grant smothered the ball on the goal-line.

The Town were more dangerous, moving the ball about spiritedly. O'Rourke from near the penalty spot lashed first time at a return pass from Whittaker but blazed the ball yards over.

W the ball sticking and the pitch cutting up, conditions were not conducive to accuracy.

A foul by Ashworth on Rioch brought the Town a free kick on the very edge of the penalty area, and after Whittaker blazed low into the ruck of players, Jardine, following up, sent it wide.

FRENCH BROUGHT INTO GAME

There were ironical cheers when French was at last brought into the game, to begin a corkscrew run, ending with him being brought down. From the free kick the Town

How the goals came

O'ROURKE for Luton after 49 minutes.
O'ROURKE for Luton after 56 minutes.
THOMPSON for Hartlepoons after 73 minutes

that it would serve to open the game up a bit.

Tinsley had to do some juggling with the ball, almost the first time he had been troubled seriously, from a centre by Wright, but all was well in the end.

Only a brilliant diving save by Green prevented French from increasing the lead with a left-footed drive that seemed booked for the far corner of the net. Rioch had made the pass, and it was a great effort by the winger.

O'ROURKE'S ANTICIPATION

Luton were now asserting their superiority, and after 56 minutes they increased their lead when O'ROURKE, with typical anticipation and judgment, flicked with his head a free kick from Whittaker well wide of Green.

The Town were going about their task in more expert style this half, not becoming bogged down as they had previously, and were probably being helped too by the less sticky going at the Kenilworth Road end.

There were visions of O'Rourke completing a hat-trick in quick time when he again bore in on goal and



John O'Rourke put Town ahead with a brilliant goal, then increased the lead seven minutes later, heading neatly past Green.

There might have been a goal for the Town in a sharp breakaway after Hartlepoons had twice been pulled up for offside. Whittaker picked up the ball and whipped it to O'Rourke, whose shot just missed the far post with Read throwing himself at the ball.

BETTER LUCK FOR TOWN

It was indicative of the bad luck the Town had been having in front of goal, and then it took a change for the better after 49 minutes when O'ROURKE put them ahead with a brilliant individual effort.

He picked up a loose ball, quite 35 yards from goal, took it in his stride, beat one opponent and then, possibly with the defence expecting him to pass, went determinedly on for goal and drove the ball low into the far corner of the net to give the Town a deserved if belated lead.

That at last broke the stalemate that had developed because of the spoiling tactics of Hartlepoons, and one hoped

stubborn Hartlepoons defence, and after O'Rourke had shot too high, Jardine, going right through into the penalty area, crashed a pass from Moore straight at Green.

There was a sticky situation at the Town end when both Riddick and Moore failed to clear their lines, and finally it was the unflappable Woods, near his goal line, who booted the ball to safety.

WHITTAKER MISSED CHANCE

Whittaker missed a chance of increasing the Town's lead by wildly driving too high after a header by O'Rourke had been cleared from perilously near the goal line.

Although Hartlepoons, by force of circumstance, were now more of an attacking force, they made little impression. Twice Woods cleared in decisive fashion, the second time almost kicking the ball out of the hands of Tinsley, who looked suitably surprised.

There was trouble for Hartlepoons following a free kick. Green came out of his goal, and Rioch lobbed over his head. Between them, on the goal line, Gill and Drysdale managed to clear, and then Whittaker had cruel luck when he shot against the near post at the end of an incisive run from a well-judged pass by Reid.

French, who was still starved of the ball, was dangerous, and he brought Green full-length after cutting into the middle.

MISSED FROM CLOSE RANGE

Best chance fell to Bradley at close range but he missed his kick and the ball was scrambled away for a corner which was cleared.

But it was quickly returned down the middle when Read failed in his tackle, and THOMPSON fastened on to a pass by Gill to reduce Hartlepoons' arrears after 73 minutes.

Riddick made a despairing tackle on the centre-forward, but he beat Tinsley quite comfortably.

This was a bolt from the blue, because Hartlepoons had not given any real indication of their ability to get back into the game. But at the same time, a gap had been left down the middle by the Town defence.

Hartlepoons suddenly began to show a lot more life in attack, and the Town's position, if not desperate, began to look at least slightly perilous.

Town were out of luck when a shot by Rioch flashed into the net marginally after the referee had blown for a free kick in his favour.

Read had a chance right in

front of goal, but although he hit it hard enough he shot straight at Gill.

At the other end, Town were near panic stations following a Hartlepoons attack, but the defence came through unscathed.

COLLISION INCIDENT

There was further trouble between Read and Green when they collided as the inside-right bored in to a centre from French. The referee booked

both Green and Read, or at least that was the impression he gave by his actions.

With Hartlepoons making a final thrust to save a point, Thompson flashed the ball across the face of the goal, and then as Wright worked his way in dangerous, Fogarty was caught offside.

In the last minute Whittaker worked his way through but Gill was on hand to kick away. Result:

LUTON TOWN 2
HARTLEPOOLS UTD. 1