

TOWN WIN THRILL-PACKED BATTLE WITH TORQUAY

Brilliant attacking play beats promotion rivals

By CHILTERN
LUTON TOWN 3, TORQUAY UNITED 2

LUTON TOWN turned on their most thrilling attacking football of the season in beating promotion-rivals Torquay United at Kenilworth Road this afternoon.

Thrill followed thrill. Torquay took a surprise lead, Town levelled through O'Rourke within a minute, and at the interval it was 1-1. Second-half goals by O'Rourke and Rioch settled storm back to get a second goal.

Considering the amount of rain we have had these last three days, the pitch was in surprisingly good condition.

That does not mean to say that it was ideal by any manner of means, but the fact remains live or six years ago before new drainage was installed, I would have taken reasonable odds that this match would have put off yesterday afternoon.

How the goals came

STUBBS for Torquay after 23 minutes.
O'ROURKE for Luton after 24 minutes.
RIOCH for Luton after 59 minutes.
O'ROURKE for Luton after 67 minutes.
BARNES for Torquay after 75 minutes.

At least there was a playable surface, it was heavy, of course, and liable to cut up quickly. This was demonstrated quickly when Torquay came out for a kickabout.

The goal areas had been covered until this morning and thus were comparatively dry.

Just as the teams came out another drenching shower broke over the ground, and had the effect of driving the diehards at the uncovered Kenilworth Road end to shelter under the Bobbers Stand.

BOTH TEAMS UNCHANGED

The Town made no change from the team that was due to play at Newport on Monday, which meant that Tommy McKechnie, standing in for the injured Tony Read, was having his first senior outing for over five months.

Torquay, too, following an impressive home victory over Rochdale last Saturday, were unchanged apart from former West Ham full-back John Bond switching places with his full-back colleague Smith.

The size of the crowd was rather difficult to estimate, since nearly everybody was

huddled under cover, but it looked as if there was a fair chance that this would be the Town's biggest League crowd of the season, the previous best having been 7,879, when Halifax were here, way back in November.

The Town won the toss, elected to defend the Kenilworth Road end, and were on the move from the start, with Whittaker popping up in the outside-right position, only to be dispossessed as he made a spirited attempt to break through.

RIDDICK BREAKS THROUGH

Then, there could have been a sensational opening, because Riddick came right through from full-back to collect a throw-in midway in the Torquay half. He beat an opponent, which took him close to goal, but he was angled, and instead of crossing the ball to the waiting O'Rourke and Whittaker, he slashed it into the side netting.

This really amounted to criminal waste.

There was a narrow escape for the Town when Clarke picked up a loose ball and made a centre which Spratt headed on. Stubbs forced Tinsley to make a spectacular if somewhat fortunate one-handed save. He pushed the ball on to the bar, and Woods was on hand to kick aw, as it came down.

TORQUAY LOOK DANGEROUS

When they were in full flight, Torquay were looking distinctly dangerous, but this was the first evidence that they might be lethal.

A spirited burst by Jardine, which took him almost to the edge of the Torquay penalty area, was stopped when he was brought down by Wyatt, though the referee let play go on.

The feature of the Town's play so far had been the way in which the full-backs, Riddick and Jardine, had come through with the ball with great effectiveness, and one such run by Riddick should have brought a goal, because he laid on a beautiful chance for Whittaker, but the winger, with the goal at his mercy,

TEAMS

LUTON TOWN: Tinsley; Riddick, Jardine; Reid, Woods, Moore; French, McKechnie; O'Rourke, Rioch, Whittaker. Sub: Edwards.

TORQUAY UNITED: McGuire; Bond, Smith; Benson, Wyatt, Wolstenholme; Barnes, Kirkman, Stubbs, Spratt, Clarke. Sub: Northcott.

Referee: Mr. P. R. Walters, of Bridgewater.

sliced the ball past the near post.

Torquay had a breakaway, and Tinsley earned applause for going down smartly to cut off a low centre from Clarke.

Town were still creating more chances, and Moore shot only a couple of feet wide from close on 25 yards.

It now became plain that Torquay had switched their full-backs before the match started, with Bond wearing Number 2 shirt and Smith Number 3. Doubtless, this was designed to combat the cleverness of French, who came into the picture with a centre, from which the Town appealed fruitfully for a penalty for hands.

FREEDOM OF THE PITCH FOR RIDDICK

Riddick seemed to have been given the freedom of the pitch, because he certainly was not playing anything like an orthodox right-back, but was occupying a fluid position in the centre of the field, and was more often in attack than defence.

Basically, where the Town were falling down in attack was their habit of trying to use too short a pass, and McKechnie was an offender in this respect.

French aroused the enthusiasm of the crowd by embarking on a long run, but disappointingly his centre rebounded off Benson.

Still, the Town were looking the more dangerous, and Torquay came in for heavy pressure in which Bond made a bad clearance. Fortunately for him, though, the ball went straight to Wyatt. Then O'Rourke and McKechnie had shots cut off.

By far the best effort, however, came from Jardine with a 25-yarder that had McGuire



Centre-forward John O'Rourke put Town on terms again only a minute after Stubbs had given Torquay an unexpected lead.

O'Rourke got Town's third goal after 67 minutes, after Whittaker had provided the opening. Torquay were now well beaten, it seemed.

scuffling at the foot of the post as he just managed to push the ball for a corner.

While the Town's tactics of about attack had not paid off yet in terms of goals, they were certainly pleasing the crowd, and Jardine again went close to getting the vital first goal with a shot that flew inches wide of the angle of the woodwork.

JARDINE BOOSTS THE ATTACK

The excitement continued, and with Jardine still boosting the attack, a pass from him found Rioch in an open space. It needed a great save by McGuire and a good recovery as Rioch followed up, to keep Torquay on level terms.

With 23 minutes gone there was a surprise development when Torquay took the lead through STUBBS.

It was a solo effort, because he gathered the ball out on the left, made some ground and then put in a high shot that caught Tinsley unprepared at the other end of his goal.

There was an immediate response from the Town, who went straight away downfield and equalised through O'ROURKE.

McKechnie pushed the ball on for the centre-forward, who hammered it in past McGuire. It looked as if the ball finally went in off the inside of the post. This was after 24 minutes.

It was exciting, tense football, of high quality considering the sticky going. Town, however, should have been in a better position than they were, and would have been but for slackness in finishing.

They were still going all out in attack, and Jardine had now crossed to the other wing to mark Barnes, who had switched with Clarke.

TOWN PLAYING 4-2-4 SYSTEM

What the Town were playing amounted to 4-2-4, with Riddick the link man in midfield and the last three consisting of Reid, Woods, Moore and Jardine.

Town were still piling on the pressure. McGuire saved a header from O'Rourke, and then had to have some mud removed from his eyes.

Moore was playing particularly well, and sent through O'Rourke with a great pass, from which the centre-forward gained a corner. This caused some concern in front of the Torquay goal before Kirkman, back deep in defence, hooked the ball out of play, as did Wyatt a minute later as the Town pressure continued relentlessly.

Then came a corner on the right, Torquay were now playing safe by packing their

26-2-66

penalty area, and only Stubbs, a lone figure, was upfield at this stage.

In their breakaway, which had not been so frequent recently, Torquay were dangerous, and Riddick came to the rescue by conceding a corner when things looked distinctly ominous.

By and large, though, this half had been the Town's by a wide margin, and the only pity was that they had not made the most of their chances.

Brilliant work by French put Town on the attack again, and O'Rourke was blatantly obstructed as he went for the centre. In the end, he did manage to have a go for the ball, but it was Bond's foot that stabbed it back and forced McGuire to go full length.

There was waste again when Moore sent away Whittaker. The winger beat two opponents brilliantly and then spoilt the whole effect by sending the ball into the side netting with O'Rourke waiting in front of the yawning net.

Nearing half-time, O'Rourke made a scintillating run, but in the end was forced to shoot from too long a range, and McGuire saved comfortably.

Half-time: LUTON TOWN 1 TORQUAY UNITED 1

It had been a great first-half, full of thrills, and the only pity was that the Town's efforts had not been crowned with success.

They went on to the attack again immediately after the start of the second half, with Jardine racing through again to bring McGuire full-length with a raking drive. McGuire then needed the trainer's sponge to remove the mud from his face after he had been fouled by McKechnie.

Again the Town attacked, with French doing the approach work this time and O'Rourke making a magnificent attempt to reach the ball with his head. He did so without being able to divert it enough to beat McGuire.

A spate of bad passing spoilt a couple of promising Town raids, though they had been braced out of character in this game.

Torquay broke away but Reid made a determined tackle on Barnes, and McKechnie got Town's attack going again by working his way into an open space before making a centre. It might have been better had O'Rourke not got a touch with his head, because the ball would have run on to Whittaker. It did, finally, but the deflection made it difficult for him to have a clear shot at goal.

Torquay owed a considerable debt to McGuire, who pulled off another first-time drive by O'Rourke after McKechnie had created an opening.

Again he was in action, diving at the feet of O'Rourke as the centre-forward sought to make contact with a low cross by French who had been sent away by Rioch.

A brief incursion to the other end saw Barnes, still spending much of his time on the left wing. Indeed the whole team was switching which probably explained the fluid nature of the Town's tactics.

Then it needed a full-length

save by McGuire to keep out a flashing header from O'Rourke.

But the Town's second goal, belated though it was, was not long delayed. It came in the 59th minute through RIOCH. It was a great effort because the young inside-left picked up a pass from O'Rourke and jiggled about with the ball on the edge of the penalty area before letting go a full-blooded, left-footed drive that flashed into the corner of the net with the gallant McGuire presumably unsighted.

There was no let-up in the excitement, because a minute later Torquay would have been on level terms again but for the vigilance and agility of Tinsley, who went full-length to keep out a tremendous long-range drive by Spratt.

REFEREE WARNS THE CROWD

Then came an announcement over the loudspeaker system to the effect that the referee would stop the game if there was any more throwing of toilet paper on to the pitch from behind the Torquay goal, as had happened after each of the Town's successes.

There was a shock for the Town when Torquay made a sudden raid and Barnes, with Stubbs completely unmarked in front of goal, pulled the ball behind the centre-forward, who had no chance of reaching it.

THIRD GOAL FOR THE TOWN

Then came the goal that the town needed so badly to really press home their advantage, and the scorer was O'ROURKE. It was in the 67th minute when, after Bond and another Torquay player had messed up a clearance, Whittaker pushed the ball low down the middle. O'Rourke brushed aside a challenge by Wyatt, and as McGuire came out desperately, the centre-forward rammed the ball low into the back of the net.

This time, there was great enthusiasm again, but I am happy to say no toilet paper.

Riddick was injured, but quickly resumed after attention, and then Torquay had a free kick, much to the disgust of the crowd, for what seemed to be a perfectly fair tackle by Rioch. It was cleared without difficulty.

Town struck again, with Whittaker pushing the ball through to Jardine, who was in the inside-right position on this occasion, but McGuire was on hand to cut out his low centre.

TORQUAY HIT BACK TO SCORE

There was still plenty of life in the game, and with a quarter of an hour to go Torquay got right back into it through scoring a second goal through BARNES.

It followed a free kick against McKechnie, hotly disputed by the Town, and indeed, it looked to me as if it should have been the other way. However, the ball came into the penalty area dangerously, and Barnes, from the outside-left position he had been occupying most of the time, beat Tinsley from close range.

There was a hold up while McGuire received attention for injury. It was followed by

a corner on the right to the Town, which was deflected to the opposite wing, where Whittaker gained possession. He drove firmly into the hands of McGuire, but after his clearance the goalkeeper collapsed, and play was stopped immediately.

There was a lengthy hold-up this time, but McGuire carried on, clutching his right side and obviously in some pain.

The Torquay trainer stayed behind the goal, and it was patently obvious that McGuire was pretty well crippled.

TORQUAY TRYING FOR EQUALISER

Torquay, of course, scenting the chance of a point, had thrown off their defensive shackles in an attempt to snatch the equaliser and were helped on a couple of occasions by some too-close passing by the Town in defence. However, Town got away with it, but generally speaking their passing was now beginning to go astray — a fact that was probably accentuated because Torquay were now coming in to meet the ball from defence.

Torquay were now storming at the Town goal, and Stubbs looked a possible



Inside-left Bruce Rioch gave the Town a belated lead with a great goal in the 59th minute.

scorer until tackled as he shot.

Relief came for the Town when McKechnie was fouled inside the Torquay half. Woods's free kick reached the penalty area, but was promptly dispatched out of it by Wyatt. However, the ball came back quickly for French to win a corner, from which O'Rourke headed wide from 15 yards.

McGuire seemed to have recovered to a large extent, but he had not been seriously tested since his injury.

Next casualty was French, who had his left eye attended to by trainer Watkins, but was quickly all right.

We were now in injury time and Torquay were making desperate attempts to draw level. In fact, there was quite a bit of tension, even though Tinsley was not being brought into action, so competent was the tackling in front of him.

We play now two minutes for a foul by Moore over whether he was guilty or not came off worst, but Tinsley went up into the crowd of players to make a fine catch. This half had now lasted 48 minutes, but the Town relieved some of the anxiety by launching a counter-attack.

Result: LUTON TOWN 3 TORQUAY 2