

HARTLEPOOLS TOOK TOWN FOR RIDE

Provoked into deep trouble

By CHILTERN

HARTLEPOOLS UNITED 2, LUTON TOWN 0

IN my experience, I cannot remember a shabbier affair than this, presumably garbed in the role of entertainment.

This was the Town's first visit to Hartlepoons and, so far as I am concerned, I hope it will be the last.

Even though they were on the receiving end of the sendings-off and bookings, the Town, at least went into the game with the idea of playing constructive football but from the early stages, it was completely obvious that Hartlepoons had no such intention.

In fact, this seemed to be a continuation of the vendetta that began at Kenilworth Road three weeks previously when we had the unsavoury spectacle of 47 free-kicks, with Hartlepoons the main offenders.

Sure enough, there were the same spoiling tactics on the second occasion, with Rioch being taken off after 13 minutes with knee ligament trouble after an unnecessarily heavy tackle.

Before the substitute, Read, could get on to the field, Hartlepoons had taken the lead when Tinsley failed to hang on to a centre by Bradley and PHYTHIAN was in hand to apply the finishing touch.

Never could the Town find the smooth stride they have been showing recently and they were never given the chance to settle down in the face of some ruthless tackling.

First effect of this came two minutes from half-time when Read clashed with Ashworth, whom he butted in retaliation and was ordered from the field.

No one, least of all myself, could condone such conduct, but it must be pointed out

that there was extreme provocation from start to finish.

Without any doubt, Jardine, a player with a completely clean record during his time as a professional, was provoked by Wright, so that he aimed a kick on him, which was completely out of character, and he, like Read, paid the extreme penalty.

This was eight minutes after half-time, reduced the Town to nine men and left them with a hopeless task, especially as Hartlepoons increased their lead six minutes later through WRIGHT, who was the player with whom Jardine had clashed.

After that, apart from a few forays that did not promise much, it was mainly a case of limiting the arrears against them so far as the Town were concerned and they managed that in the face of pressure, with Whittaker having dropped back into the defence.

In view of the circumstances, to be critical of individual performances would be completely unfair.

"ALLOWED TO GET AWAY WITH IT"

As Manager George Martin said, "What Hartlepoons were allowed to get away with was absolutely disgraceful. They did not try to play football."

As a result, the Town were scarcely in it as an attacking force, with O'Rourke, lacking support, well closed out. Much the same applied to McKechnie and the absence of Rioch, who has been a striking force recently, was a handicap.

For Pleat, brought in at the last moment after a road dash of over 200 miles, due to the non-attendance of French, this was not the ideal occasion on which to make a first team comeback, though he did his best, as did Whittaker, who was always lively.

Throughout, the defence had to carry a heavy burden, shouldered willingly enough, especially by Reid, Woods and Riddick.

HARTLEPOOLS UNITED: Green; Grant, Drysdale; Ashworth, Gill, Storton; Wright, Thompson, Phythian, Fogarty, Bradley.

LUTON TOWN: Tinsley; Riddick, Jardine; Reid, Woods, Moore; Pleat, McKechnie, O'Rourke, Rioch, (Read), Whittaker.

Referee: C. M. Cooke (Blackburn)