

TWO GOALS DOWN, TWO MEN OFF AND ONE HURT

Town's promotion bid suffers a setback

By CHILTERN
HARTLEPOOLS 2, LUTON TOWN 0

THIS was a day of utter woe for Luton Town. Not only did their promotion hopes suffer setback in a 2-0 defeat at Hartlepoons, but inside-left Bruce Rioch went off injured, his substitute Tony Read was sent off, and so was left-back Freddie Jardine.

In addition, Tommy McKechnie had his name taken.

It was a tough encounter, reminiscent of the recent meeting of the teams at Kenilworth Road.

It was sunny but cold, and there was a meagre crowd on this rather bleak Hartlepoons ground.

Despite the distance, the Town had their usual quota of supporters, who left Luton at midnight last night and arrived here around eight o'clock this morning.

Hartlepoons were unchanged from the team that beat Rochdale last Saturday.

The pitch looked rough, but soft.

Town changed into their red shirts, black shorts, and white stockings.

There was a tricky cross wind.

HARTLEPOOLS UNITED: Green; Grant, Drydale; Ashworth, Gill, Storton; Wright, Thompson, Pythian, Fogarty, Bradley, Substitute, McPheat.

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

Referee: Mr. C. M. Cooke, of Blackburn.

Town looked lively in the early stages, with Pleat finding O'Rourke wide on the left wing, but the centre-forward was crowded out.

It had been a pretty dull start. Town had looked the more assertive, but without really getting to grips with the Hartlepoons defence. In fact, the first positive action came from a long shot by Ashworth with which Tinsley coped adequately.

Tinsley had another uncomfortable task in cutting out a lofted centre by Storton in the face of a strong challenge, but he did so bravely, and then came a free kick to the Town for a foul by Ashworth on Rioch.

This was well placed by Woods and headed on by Rioch, but McKechnie found himself blotted out.

Another free kick to the Town, for a foul by Grant on McKechnie, enabled them to make progress again, but Pleat, left-footed, shot high over.

FOLLOWING THE DOUR PATTERN

This match was following the dour pattern of the one at Luton three weeks ago with

some tough tackling going on. There was a stoppage when Rioch was fouled by Grant and injured, and Manager George Martin came on the field shortly after the appearance of trainer Charlie Watkin, but the referee directed him to the touchline.

Rioch resumed with a heavy limp and went to outside left. Meanwhile Mr. Martin was on

the opposite side of the field from the trainer's bench, along with Watkins, who finally helped Rioch off which seemed to call for the appearance of the substitute Read.

In the meantime, with the Town down to ten men, because Read had not had time to remove his tracksuit, Hartlepoons broke away to take the lead through PHYTHIAN after 14 minutes.

It followed a long free-kick by Bradley, which Tinsley failed to hold, again in the face of competition, and Pythian put in the ball from close in.

Sure enough, Read came on as substitute immediately after this and was immediately in the picture with a left-footed shot which went too high from a badly-placed corner by Whittaker.

TINSLEY CLAWS THE BALL AWAY

Hartlepoons were dangerous again through Bradley, who finally hammered in a shot that Tinsley clawed out at the near post.

After this, more pattern began to appear in Town's play, though obviously they were worried by the spoiling tactics of the home team. At the same time, they were not making a real impression on a tough defence.

At times, Hartlepoons were moving the ball about with considerable accuracy and to good effect, which suggested that this strong-arm stuff was not necessary.

Storton received some finger-wagging from the referee for a foul on Read, who was now operating in his usual position of inside-right, with McKechnie in the other inside position. Then Reid and Fogarty had a mild crush which brought further intervention from the referee, whom it looked would be forced to take stronger measures before long.

First really clear-cut chance for the Town came after 26 minutes, when Pleat made a first-time lob, from which the ball bobbed about in front of goal. Finally, Whittaker shot straight at Green, who must have been pleased.

ANOTHER THREAT BY HARTLEPOOLS

For some minutes, the Town had enjoyed the better of the play without looking really menacing, and it was a sharp attack by Hartlepoons that brought the next threat, with

corner, following which Tinsley saved comfortably from Ashworth. At the other end, O'Rourke had a header deflected for a corner, but it came to nothing.

Then, the Town had a lucky let-off when, from a centre by Bradley, Thompson swung on to the ball, beat Tinsley completely, only for the ball to strike the underpart of the bar and rebound into play and be scrambled away hurriedly.

Moore made a worthy attempt to level matters with a job that went too high. Read vainly trying to reach it with his head.

Then, McKechnie had his name taken for clipping Fogarty's heels from behind—a comparatively mild offence compared with what had gone before. The free kick created considerable confusion in the Town penalty area, before finally Town were given a free kick for some infringement.

Yet another free kick came the Town's way when Gill ran straight into Read, but the free kick brought nothing. Town, in fact, were showing no penetration.

Then came a foul against them when Moore and Jardine sandwiched Thompson, and it nearly brought a goal, because Ashworth's kick went through a crowd of players and Tinsley had to dive in a hurry to head the ball at the foot

TONY READ SENT OFF

Then more trouble broke out between Read and Ashworth, and the Town player became the second Town player to have his name taken. Worse than that happened, because Read was then sent off by the referee, apparently for hitting Ashworth with his head.

The strange thing was that the Town had been the worse sufferers. At the moment nine fouls against Hartlepoons and four against the Town.

It seemed to me harsh treatment so far as Read was concerned, because he had had plenty of provocation. So now, the Town were really up against it, with a player injured and also deprived of their substitute.

Riddick got the Town out of a tight hole after Woods had missed the ball in the air, and Fogarty was threatening.

HARTLEPOOLS 1
LUTON TOWN 0
Hartlepoons opened with a couple of brisk attacks, in one of which Tinsley saved smartly from Fogarty.

French gives Town a scare

LUTON TOWN got off on the wrong foot this morning when their outside-right, Graham French, failed to arrive at the ground in time to catch the coach to Hitchin to board the train to Hartlepoons.

Chairman Tom Hodgson, who was to travel with the team, stayed behind in the hope of picking up French and getting him to Hitchin in time.

In the end, the chairman went to French's house, found the player worried because his wife, who has recently had a baby, had had a bad night.

The chairman went to find David Pleat, who has not been in the first team for some months, and covered the 230 miles from Luton to Hartlepoons in something like 4½ hours to complete the team about an hour before the kick-off.

Otherwise, the plan was to play McKechnie at outside-right and re-call Tony Read, who was the substitute, as his inside partner. This, of course, would have left the Town without a substitute, but for the arrival of Pleat.

In the event, Read remained substitute.

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were concerned. Yet they showed fight, but O'Rourke missed a possible chance by shooting wide.

Now they were doing the only thing open to them, which was throwing everything into attack, but it was a pretty hopeless proposition.

The Town were pretty rattled now, and McKechnie made a late tackle on Ashworth to come in for more finger-wagging from the referee.

Next to come in for a lecture was Woods for kicking the ball away in frustration when the referee gave a foul against Reid.

WAS IT A GOAL FOR HARTLEPOOLS?

There was a roar from the crowd which turned to anguished gasps of surprise when Pythian appeared to have put the ball firmly into the back of the net. Whether it went there or not, I was not at all sure, but it came back smartly. The referee waved on play, and there was no reaction from the linesman, who was well positioned.

It was still a losing battle so far as the Town were concerned, however, but at least they were putting a brave front on it and trying to pull back their arrears.

Riddick went up into attack to make a centre from which McKechnie was caught offside.

Again Riddick came through, this time to be brought down quite fairly, let it be said, before he could part with the ball to advance.

Just on time, Hartlepoons gained a corner on the left which Tinsley clawed out effectively, but the ball was returned by Wright into the goalmouth and plugged into the net by Pythian, who was a clear yard offside.

Then the Town's troubles continued when McKechnie was injured in a tackle.

By my watch, this half had lasted 48 minutes, which was not so much injury time as sending-off time. Result:

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LUTON 0