

TOWN FIDDLE AND SURRENDER VITAL PROMOTION POINT

No finish without John O'Rourke

By CHILTERN

LUTON TOWN 0, LINCOLN CITY 0

FOR the first time this season Luton Town failed to score at home when they entertained lowly Lincoln City this afternoon. So badly off form was the attack that the crowd, expecting plenty of goals today, began to slow handclap.

Town can claim in extenuation that they were without leading goalscorer John O'Rourke, who was unfit, but they had chances enough to have clinched both points in their promotion bid.

It was a shock for the Town this morning when John O'Rourke reported that he did not feel fit enough to take his usual place.

Apparently, he said that he could run, turn and jump but not kick the ball without discomfort. This was the legacy of the kick he received against Colchester nearly a fortnight ago, and the only consolation to be drawn from his absence today was that if he played and contributed no more than he did at Nottingham last Saturday, he might as well have been where he was, sitting in the stand.

Tommy McKechnie, who

TEAMS

LUTON TOWN—Tinsley; Riddick, Thomson; Reid, Woods, Moore; French, Read, McKechnie, Edwards, Whittaker. Substitute: Rivers.

LINCOLN CITY—Wakeham; Jones, Smith; Milner, Heward, Grummitt; Barton, Holmes, Bonson, Fencott, Godbold. Substitute: Hudson.

Referee: D. A. Corbett, of Wolverhampton.

had been kept back from the reserve team, possibly with a view to such an eventuality, came in as deputy. So, there were in fact five changes in the Town team, two of them positional.

There were switches for Reid and Edwards, and those brought in were Tinsley and Thomson, as well as McKechnie.

Lincoln, making a great effort to avoid having to apply for re-election, were without their centre-half Moore, and Heward took over.

Only other alterations were at wing-half, where Milner and Grummitt switched.

PITCH IN GOOD CONDITION

There was a very reasonable crowd—probably in excess of 8,000 at the start.

Remarkably, the pitch had dried up following its soaking in this week's deluge, and a dry morning had done wonders.

The Town were set to de-

the Town were the better side in midfield, they were much on top but, their lack of finish was still only too evident.

Worth-while shooting by either team continued to be at a premium, and such attempts as were made were wild in the extreme as was illustrated by one from Moore, which sent the ball yards too high.

There were appeals for a penalty when McKechnie was brushed off the ball by Heward, but the crowd was looking for excitement, and they certainly had not had their ration so far.

Towards half-time, Lincoln began to show a bit more ability in attack, but with no better result than the Town had achieved with their more liberal opportunities.

The whole essence of it was that there was no-one on either side at inside-forward with the ability to hold the ball in midfield and start off something of a constructive nature. In fact, pretty nearly everything that had gone on smacked of hit or miss, and mostly it had added up to "miss."

Such shooting as there had been had been nothing better than atrocious, and even French, the one Town forward who looked as if he might lift this match off its level of mediocrity, was not finishing well.

Then out of the blue there nearly came a goal, with Whittaker firmly heading a centre by French, only to send the ball inches over the top. It was the best scoring attempt we had seen for some considerable time.

With seconds to go to half-time, Reid brought Wakeham into swift action with a stirring drive. On the face of things, the Town's best chance of scoring seemed to be from wing-half. Half-time:

LUTON TOWN 0
LINCOLN CITY 0

The Town resumed with Riddick at centre-forward, Edwards reverting to his more natural position of left-back, and Thomson moving over to the right flank, where he also is more at home, not that he had done anything wrong in his original position.

In fact, so much switching was going on between the Town's three inside forwards, that it was difficult to pinpoint who was playing where, but the point was that at least an attempt had been made to achieve something constructive by bringing a ball player like Riddick into the forward line.

TOWN BUILD UP THEIR ATTACK

Town restarted well, building up pressure, but Whittaker was bundled off the ball as he sought to connect with Riddick's header inside the penalty area. Next, French hit a centre far too close to Wakeham to be of any benefit.

This particular bout of Town pressure, over Lincoln made a break and Jones brought Tinsley on all fours from long range. The goalkeeper also collected with some ease a centre by Godbold.

Lincoln began to move with more purpose, and Holmes teed up the ball for Godbold, whose shot was deflected for a corner by the quick reaction of Woods, who headed away, too, as Barton made his centre.

Some of the Town's passing was really chronically bad, and it was tending to simplify the task of a Lincoln defence that had never really been extended.

OVER THE TOP FROM SIX YARDS

Easiest chance of the match was laid on by McKechnie for Moore, who came running through and then provided the complete anti-climax by lifting the ball over from six yards with only Wakeham to beat.

Such was the scarcity of scoring openings being created that the Town really could not afford to squander one of this sort.

Moore was now joining the attack, though whether by design or an excess of enthusiasm was difficult to know.

There were signs of desperation now about the Town's play, and it was not improving



Tommy McKechnie played at centre-forward for Town in place of John O'Rourke, who was unfit.

the constructive nature of things.

With two or three players yelling for the ball, Read chose to shoot from longish range and sent the ball straight to Wakeham, who saved without difficulty.

MOORE ROAMING HOPEFULLY

Moore was holding a roaming commission, and so, too, was Barton for Lincoln, because he was more often to be found at inside-left than on the right wing.

Heward was soundly booed from bringing down Riddick on the edge of the penalty area out on the left, but the free kick, like pretty much else the Town had done in front of goal, went to waste.

Whittaker tried to spark something off by embarking on a long run down the middle but hung on too long and was caught in possession. Then, the slow handclap broke out, and while I do not agree with this as a method of demonstration, I must say that the game had deserved it.

A long free-kick by Woods from well inside his own half brought Wakeham his most difficult task for some time, because the ball bounced in front of him, threatened to elude him, and in the end he was glad to push it for a corner as the Town forwards closed in. Clear-cut openings, however, were not being created, and such half chances as were cropping up were going to waste.

Drizzling rain was falling

now. It was making the surface greasy, and was scarcely likely to come to the aid of these two unimaginative teams.

There was mass pressure by the Town after this with Moore still working in a sort of auxiliary attacking role in no sort of set position. He had a shot beaten down inside the penalty area, and then was penalised for pushing, all of which was frustrating, not only to him but to the crowd.

It was really difficult to pinpoint what sort of forward formation the Town were playing, but it now looked as if Read had gone to outside-left with Whittaker, perhaps feeling he had been neglected too long, going into the middle in search of more work.

In the event it nearly paid off, because he got a foot to the ball to slip it to McKechnie.

nie, but the centre-forward was dead out of luck, because his shot beat Wakeham's dive and rebounded off the foot of the post. It was sheer bad luck.

There was no doubt that Lincoln had settled for a point, and who was to blame them in their present parlous League position? Now they had pulled everybody back into defence, so that when Whittaker gained a corner, all the eleven players were back in their own penalty area. Out they came, racing like hares as the ball was lobbed forward, to catch Edwards offside as he ventured forward.

In general now, Lincoln were content to leave only Bonson upfield, and even he was coming right back whenever Town won a corner-kick. Further heavy Town pressure just could not break down the defensive barrier, despite determined efforts by Whittaker and Read, and then the Town's progress was held up by a free kick for hands against Moore.

It now looked as if the Town had allowed to slip away a point they certainly could not afford, and then, with a couple of minutes left, Whittaker, who had been injured in a fierce raid, went off, and Rivers came on as substitute.

NOW OR NEVER FOR TOWN

It was now or never as far as the Town were concerned, and, although they kept up pressure, there was not much real hope of a goal, even though Read got in a header, Wakeham saving comfortably enough. Result:

LUTON TOWN 0
LINCOLN 0

met the same fate of many previous ones and broke down prematurely, and then there was a half a chance when Reid came through strongly to make a centre, but Edwards could not quite reach it, though he appealed vainly that he had been pushed in his attempt.

French flashed into the picture with a dazzling piece of work and a slide-rule centre. Read and Edwards both went up together with Grummitt, but it was the Lincoln man's head that met the ball, and all that Town got out of it was a corner-kick.

There was no disputing that



RAY WHITTAKER who went off injured and . . .



ALAN RIVERS who came on as substitute for the last two minutes of the match.

fend the Oak Road end, and there was a quiet sort of start, with both teams making tentative attacks which did not lead to much in the end.

There was a determined effort by Edwards to give the Town the all-important first goal when he fastened on a pass by Moore, but Wakeham came out quickly to smother the shot at the expense of a corner, and was injured in the process.

He recovered quickly and from the corner-kick well placed by Whittaker, French headed the ball bang into the goalmouth, where Read, leaning back, hooked it high over.

MAINLY A BATTLE OF DEFENCES

The Town were playing the ball cleverly out of defence, but so far were not receiving a great deal of response from the somewhat patchwork-looking forward line.

There was not much threat from either attack, or much in way of incident.

Edwards had a swing aim at a centre by French, but sent the ball well wide, and Read saw a shot beaten down.

In the main, though, defences were completely on top, and so far, at any rate, there had been a distinct shortage of constructive ideas in the front lines.

Quite the best scoring effort came from French, who veered into the middle, beating two men in the process, and then surprised Lincoln by trying a left-footed shot from nearly 35 yards that dipped inches over the bar with Wakeham groping.

LINCOLN WASTE A CHANCE

Play continued in much the same tack, with neither set of forwards showing sufficient penetration to test the goalkeepers, and the only incidents were long-range shots by Moore and Reid, which went over by a quite comfortable margin.

A decision for hands against Woods inches outside the penalty area, against which he protested in vain, gave Lincoln a free kick which they wasted in prodigal fashion. Milner pushed the ball out to Jones, whose cross was wild in the extreme and was cleared easily by Riddick.

An attempted Town raid