

TOWN GRAB TWO POINTS

Timely goal from Rioch

By CHILTERN

LUTON TOWN 2, STOCKPORT COUNTY 0

AFTER making the sort of flying, tearaway start that seemed to suggest victory by a wide margin and a subsequent boost to their goal average, the Town rather made heavy weather of beating this opposition.

Everything was going well until the 15th minute when Jardine, making an ambitious run upfield in an effort to force home an attack, collided with Collins and was carried off the field with a severely sprained ankle.

When that happened, the Town were leading by a goal cleverly taken by RIOCH in the sixth minute after Fleet had kept out a point-blank shot from O'Rourke and, even at that early stage, the margin in their favour could have been greater.

Of course, it might have been merely coincidence that the consequent loss of rhythm followed the removal of Jardine, though there seemed no reason for this because Slough was a more than adequate deputy.

At the same time, the Town went through a fortunate period during which their woodwork was twice hit and when Read made sensational saves from Price and Haydock.

However, in the main, the experienced Stockport attack was fairly well contained and there were few other real scares before half-time, when the situation was unchanged.

TOWN MEANT BUSINESS

From the way in which the Town began the second half it seemed that not only did they mean business, but that they might well have had a pep talk during the interval.

Fleet, at full stretch, just managed to reach a header from O'Rourke and was concerned in some other near things before the Town gained the goal that finally meant that they had a safe grip on the two points they so urgently needed to press home their promotion claims.

O'Rourke, who, without being at his incisive best, was certainly a worrying influence on the visiting defence, harassed Haydock and Clarke, so that the latter pulled him down and the referee had no hesitation in pointing to the penalty spot.

REFEREE HAD NO DOUBTS

One or two diehard Town fans with whom I spoke were inclined to regard it as a harsh decision, but the referee had no such doubts and that was good enough for me.

These days, WHITTAKER is the automatic choice for a job of this kind and he made no mistake in placing the ball wide of the diving Fleet's right hand.

After that, Stockport did not seriously threaten to deprive the Town of their reward, though Read, making his first senior appearance in goal, had a few chances to show the quality of his anticipation.

Obviously, he can now forget any idea of blossoming

forth into a consistent marksman because it is now obvious that his future lies in preventing goals and not scoring them.

With only three goals against them in seven matches, the defence is going through a prosperous period indeed, thanks in large measure to the influence of Woods, who was again in command in the middle.

DEFENSIVE RIDDICK

Circumstances dictated that Riddick should play a more defensive role than would have been the case otherwise, but he did it well and it fell to the lot of Moore to have the chance to be more mobile.

Whole-hearted and hard-fighting, Thomson has won back his place completely on merit, and Slough's display was such as to assuage the disappointment felt about the mishap to Jardine.

For once in a while, the chief danger in attack was not from the wingers, both of whom were kept quiet, but from the inside men, of whom Reid had one of his better games in the forward line, and Rioch made a highly satisfactory return to the team.

LUTON TOWN: Read; Thomson, Jardine (Slough); Riddick, Woods, Moore; French, Reid, O'Rourke, Rioch, Whittaker.

STOCKPORT COUNTY: Fleet; Collins, Tillotson; Parry, Clarke, Goodwin; Allchurch, Haydock, White, Young, Price. Substitute: Shawcross.

Referee: P. R. Walters, Bridgwater. Attendance: 9,524.