

TOWN MAKE IT HARD

Could have had more goals

By ONLOOKER

Luton Town 2, Halifax 0

TWO points from the Town from their opening League match of the season against Halifax at Kenilworth Road on Saturday gave them a satisfactory start to the campaign.

However it was a game which they should have won convincingly, and had they been more assertive in the first half then more goals must have come their way.

As it was, the sultry heat was not the perfect weather for football, and in particularly for the opening match of the season.

It did not help players to recapture their urgency after the summer break, and a lack of purpose from both sides did not make for bright entertainment for the spectators in the first half.

However some encouragement from Manager George Martin at half-time changed all this. The Town looked a different proposition when they came out for the second half. Gone was the over-emphasis on defence which had spoiled their first half performance, and they went to it with a will to win the points.

In the 46th minute the stalemate was broken when KING put them in front with a rising shot into the roof of the net, and before Halifax knew what had hit them, the ball was there again, this time from RIOCH who made good use of a centre from Pleat.

Halifax's rearguard had looked competent in the first 45 minutes when the Town forwards had been shy of having a go, but once the pressure was on them the gaps appeared, and with a better run of the ball, the now eager Town forwards could have gone on to greater things.

As it turned out, the double shock of conceding two goals in such a short space of time



was something from which they could never recover.

Not that they were given much opportunity, because the Town covered well in defence, and the visitors, wild in their finishing, had nobody with the skill to break them down.

In the first half Halifax had been allowed to look the more dangerous because the Town allowed them to get a grip in midfield.

However their attacks never matured despite some astute prompting by Atkins, and this developed towards a stalemate which was so frustrating for the fans.

Frustration led to a proportion of the crowd chanting for the return of John O'Rourke, top scorer last season.

However they found no complaints when Luton struck home with their two goals just after the interval. The first of them was the second goal in two appearances for

the Town for new signing Gerry King from Torquay United.

The previous week at Millwall, King impressed me as a ball-player. He did the same this week in his quiet fashion, but more important is the fact that two goals in two matches could mean that the Town have found in him a replacement for O'Rourke's opportunism.

PLEAT UNFORTUNATE NOT TO SCORE

Unfortunate not to be on the scoring sheet was David Pleat. He bore the brunt of the attacking in the first half, forsaking his wing for a path up the middle, and played his heart out with little or no support.

His efforts were matched after the interval by those of Whittaker, who had been doing a good job in midfield early on, and he again gave evidence that his sharp crosses can be match winners for the Town.

Once they were on top, Rioch and Riddick played a prominent part, and there was also strong backing from Thomson, who has settled down well in his new position, and Jardine.

With the visiting defence hesitating, a good chance fell to Whittaker, who did some quick thinking in moving in to dispossess Smith, but he was wide of the mark with his final shot.

Then Pleat cleverly beat two men inside the area from a pass by Whittaker, with White glad to give away a corner to save Pleat's shot.

CLOSE CALL FOR HALIFAX

In the closing minutes there was another close call for Halifax when Whittaker pushed the ball into the centre for Pleat, but his shot was cleared off the line for a corner, and another chance went astray through the run of the ball when Riddick tried to rush in another centre from the outside-left.

Pre-match planning does not always come off, and in this match the Town showed that they have the ability to change their tactics to suit the occasion, while Halifax appeared at a loss when their careful build-up failed to produce results in the shape of goals.

LUTON TOWN: Read; Slough, Jardine; Thomson, Rivers, Moore; Pleat, King, Riddick, Rioch, Whittaker. Substitute: Thear.

HALIFAX TOWN: White; Russell, Holt; Pickering, Clarke, Smith; Lee (R.), Cliff, Wooler, Atkins, Taylor. Substitute: Fidler.

Referee: E. T. Jennings, Stourbridge.
Attendance: 6,149.