

BRIGHT DISPLAY ON SATURDAY

By ONLOOKER

Luton Town 3, Newport County 1

AN ENCOURAGING victory for the Town, who, now that they are settling down as a team, are finding the way to goal coming more easily.

They were superior all round to a rather punchless Newport County side, and had the number of opportunities which were created in this match been turned into goals, then their win could have been easily more convincing.

As it was, there was a dangerous spell early in the second half when the Town relaxed their grip and allowed Newport to pull a goal back. The chance was there for the Welshmen to go on and rescue a point, but they did not have thrust to better a staunch Town rear-guard again, and with the Town quickly snapping out of their lethargy in attack to take control once more, Newport's chance was gone for ever.

Both sides took a time to settle down, and it needed a goal from Rivers in the 35th minute before the Town started to move purposefully.

The goal came when from a corner by Whittaker on the right, Rioch had a first-time shot blocked by a defender, and RIVERS was able to move in on the re-bounce and take his goal well.

The twin threat of French and Pleat then started to find holes in the Newport defence, and French back in the side for his first game of the season, showed his value with footwork of a far higher quality than those around him and some well-placed crosses, which Pleat was unfortunate not to turn to advantage on more than one occasion.

NICELY-TAKEN GOAL BY WHITTAKER

The Town were looking sharper in attack, and the crowd rose expectantly for a second goal when Riddick hit first time a cross by French, but his shot which had beaten Beswick, was just wide.

Pleat was unfortunate when Beswick saved a close-range header from him from another French cross, but the Town's persistent pressure had to pay off some time, and the second goal came two minutes from the interval.

It came when WHITTAKER scored with a great rising drive into the roof of the net after Riddick had slipped the ball accurately through to him.

Good work by Pleat and Riddick at the start of the second half finished with Beswick making a good save from another rising drive by Whittaker near the angle of the woodwork, but the Town were not showing quite so much urgency as they were in the first half, and Newport were getting more of the ball in midfield.

However, they did not look really dangerous, except for the hard-working Thomas on the right-wing, and it came as something of a surprise when FRASER pulled a goal back for them in the 59th minute when he headed the ball in from close range from a good centre by Thomas.

Rathbone moved upfield

following a corner to try and drive on Newport, and Read did well to take a shot from him out of the air.

However there was just not sufficient drive in the Newport attack, and soon the Town were dictating the pattern of the play again.

Chances were carved out for Riddick who shot tamely at Beswick, and for Rioch who was unlucky when the ball bounced awkwardly for him with only the goalkeeper to beat, and Beswick was able to kick away.

Still the Town strove to make the game safe, and Beswick just reached a corner from Whittaker before the on-rushing Riddick, and French mis-hit his shot after Thomson had broken through dangerously to lay on a good chance.

Town were playing the football in midfield, but wasting a lot of opportunities they were creating, and it was not until the 78th minute that the destination of the points became certain when a great shot by RIOCH brought the Town their third goal.

The build up was almost equally as good as the shot with the ball coming right out from the Town defence without a Newport player touching it, and then on to Whittaker whose defence splitting cross-pass found Rioch who controlled the ball and picked his spot before placing the ball perfectly wide of Beswick.

JARDINE JOINED IN ATTACK

French caused more danger to Newport immediately afterwards with a shot from the right-wing which Beswick failed to take cleanly, and the goalkeeper was a little fortunate to recover himself and gather a back-heeled shot by Pleat.

Jardine was joining in the attack to some effect, and he placed one particularly good centre across the face of the goal which nobody managed to connect with.

Then came a break by Whittaker who made a good run through before finishing with a good rising drive which Beswick just managed to tip over the top, and in the closing minutes of the game Beswick stood virtually alone between Luton and more goals.

LUTON TOWN: Read; Slough, Jardine; Thomson, Rivers, Moore; Pleat, Riddick, French, Rioch, Whittaker. Sub: Grieve.

NEWPORT COUNTY: Beswick; Williams, Bird; Rowland, Rathbone, Hill; Thomas, Pugh, Fraser, Jones, Morgan. Sub: Wookey.

Referee: R. Tinkler, Boston. Attendance: 3,377.