

TOWN'S VICTORY COULD HAVE BEEN MORE CONVINCING

Forwards did not take all their chances

2745
3-9-66

By ONLOOKER

LUTON TOWN 3, NEWPORT COUNTY 1

A TWO-GOAL burst by Rivers and Whittaker just before the interval, plus a well-taken second-half goal by Rioch, ensured two points for Luton Town at Kenilworth Road this afternoon.

The game was marked by periods of aimless play and a number of chances missed by the Town forwards.

And, at one point in the second half, Newport went close to levelling the scores.

The Town made a late change in their intended team when Graham French came in for his first match of the season at centre-forward with Gordon Riddick moving to inside-right.

King, who has scored in all but one match this season, had to drop out because of an ankle injury sustained in Monday night's match against Aldershot and this gave the opportunity for French, who has now settled his differences with the club, to return.

French's move to centre-forward looked a good move on the part of the manager.

was cleared for a throw-in by Moore.

French came into action first with some clever foot-work in midfield, but his pass out to Thomson on the right was a little erratic and went out of play.

Rivers came away with the ball in the next Newport attack, but spoiled it by moving the ball to Hill, whose pass out to Morgan had the Town defending again. A free-kick on the edge of the area, taken by Read, got the Town out of trouble.

CORNER AFTER FRENCH SHOT

Little in the way of excitement came in the early stages and the Town were taking some time to settle into a rhythm. When they next tried to launch an attack, a combination between French and Riddick went astray with a bad return pass by Riddick.

Then, from a throw-in, French closed in to shoot dangerously and the ball came off Beswick for a corner taken by Whittaker which the goalkeeper saved easily.

The Town were now looking particularly dangerous and Jardine came up to have a shot which Beswick saved by the near post at the expense of another corner.

Gradually Luton were taking the initiative. Thomson sent Pleat away down the right wing, but Bird pushed the ball back smartly to his goalkeeper.

With Newport trying to work their way through, Hill put the ball into the middle. Slough tried to clear but only managed to drive it against a ruck of Newport players, and Moore dribbled away to safety.

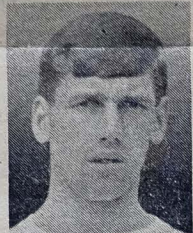
CHANCE FOR RIDDICK

French, Pleat and Whittaker all had a part in the next Luton raid, which finished with a high cross by Slough which Beswick gathered.

Best chances of a goal so far fell to Riddick who was unfortunate in heading just wide from another long centre from Slough.

A lot of aimless play fol-

lowed and so far neither side had settled down to any pattern.



Alan Rivers who put Luton ahead in the 36th minute.

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Luton's passes were still going astray in midfield but Rioch sent French away to make a good centre across the face of the goal to Jardine who had moved up on the left wing, but he failed to get the ball across.

Thomson was getting through a lot of work in driving Luton on, and another through pass from him was pushed back to the goalkeeper by Rathbone before Luton's forwards could get control.

There were gasps from the crowd when Riddick hit the ball on the volley from a cross by French but was just wide.

A bad clearance by Moore which went straight to Williams put the Town goal in danger when the full-back shot. Tony Read came out to save well in face of a challenge by Jones, who was injured in the clash and had to receive attention.

PUGH SHOT WASTED

Jones quickly recovered and sparked off the next Newport attack with an inside pass to Morgan but Pugh wasted it by shooting yards wide.

Luton were trying hard to get their attack moving but Newport were covering well and were doing their share of attacking without ever looking really dangerous.

Following a throw-in on the left, Hill put the ball high on

to the roof of the stand behind the goal. Riddick had taken up a position as a prompter for the Town. Rioch had a shot which was just wide of the mark.

Persistence by Jones won Newport a free kick just outside the area but Pugh fired in a weak shot which Read had well covered.

Riddick had to receive attention after a tackle by Pugh but continued after treatment.

Thompson set the Town moving again with a pass to Whittaker on the right and Riddick moved up just right to meet the centre with his head, but once again it was just the wrong side of the post.

Whittaker was covering a lot of ground and turned up again on the left wing to make a centre to Pleat which was not picked up and Bird came away with the ball. However, Newport did not stay in possession long and the Town came near to taking the lead when Whittaker left Pleat with only the goalkeeper to beat, but the opportunity was wasted.

For a spell Whittaker took up his orthodox position on the left wing where he was enjoying a deal of success, but again he wasted a chance through inaccurate shooting when he sent a left-footed drive too high.

The first real action for Tony Read came from a shot by Bird which the goalkeeper took easily on his line. Then Bird was in action at the other end, getting in quickly to push the ball away from Rioch.

LUTON TAKE THE LEAD

The Town took the lead in the 36th minute through RIVERS who moved up for a corner by Whittaker on the right. The ball came back to Rioch who blazed away but had his shot blocked, and Rivers moved in to make certain.

A sharp break down the right by French caught Newport off guard again and his centre went to Pleat near a post but the goalkeeper just managed to grab his close-range header.

With two minutes to go to half-time, Luton, who were looking a lot more deadly in their finishing now, went further ahead through a great drive by WHITTAKER, following a pass by Riddick.

Then almost on half-time, Read did well to come away



Ray Whittaker got the second just before half-time.

with the ball, following a scramble in front of goal with Pugh. Half-time:

LUTON TOWN 2
NEWPORT 0

The Town started the second half back on the attack but Rioch and French both failed to find a way through the defence.

In the first Newport raid Slough gave away a corner on the left and from it Thomas tried to hook the ball in but it rebounded off Rivers back to the winger who then was awarded a free-kick just outside the area. This was headed out by Thomson with Jardine sending the ball upfield.

Pleat and Riddick combined to let Whittaker in with a shot which was saved by Beswick near the angle of a post.

The Jones put Newport back on to the attack and

STOP-WATCH COMPETITION

Luton's first goal, time 35 minutes 50 seconds.

Read gave away a corner in saving one-handed a shot by Thomas.

There was still a lot of action coming from Newport and Morgan prompted them from a deep position with a through ball to Jones who was beaten by Slough.

Then the Town came back and Rathbone was spoken to by the referee after an altercation with Pleat. The Town were given a free-kick which was taken by Whittaker and Riddick pushed the ball round the wall of defenders to Jardine, whose shot was off target.

Morgan then wasted a chance for Newport. He tried a shot which Read had well covered when his centre-forward Fraser was well placed for a pass. At the other end, Whittaker shot wide when he latched on to a short pass by Riddick.

LEAD COULD HAVE BEEN GREATER

Generally, one had the feeling that had the Town only accepted the chances that had come their way they could well have had a more commanding lead. As it was, they now seemed more inclined to fall on the defence and Newport were getting more of the ball.

When Luton came back Rioch made a good pass to French on the left, but Riddick was unable to connect with his centre.

NEWPORT PULL BACK

Jones wasted too much time when the ball came to him in a good raid started by Pugh but the ball was deflected back to Thomas and Newport scored in the 59th minute when FRASER headed home

How the goals came

RIVERS for Luton after 35 minutes.
WHITTAKER for Luton after 43 minutes.
FRASER for Newport after 59 minutes.
RIOCH for Luton after 78 minutes



Bruce Rioch netted a fine 3rd goal for Luton.

wear and Riddick tried to get the Town moving again with a pass to Whittaker, but was beaten by numbers when the ball came back to him.

Then the dangerous Jones, in the inside-right position, sent a good ball to Pugh who was pulled up for offside.

AIMLESS KICKING BY BOTH SIDES

There was another spell of aimless kicking by both sides before the Town won a free-kick for a foul by Rathbone climbing on the back of Pleat. Taken by Thomson, it was cleared without danger to the Newport goal.

Riddick was injured in the next Luton attack in making a pass to Whittaker. Rowland, the Newport right-half, also went down and had to receive attention.

Play continued with Whittaker taking a corner on the left, which Beswick just



reached before Riddick. Then Thomson broke through determinedly with a pass to French who shot across the face of the goal.

The Town kept up the pressure but it was relieved when offside was given against French.

Newport brought on Wokey, their substitute, in the 73th minute when Rowland, who appeared to have a back injury, went off.

Wokey's first real action was in putting French away with a careless back-pass and it nearly spelled a goal when French closed in and centred from close range to Pleat. Beswick made a timely save.

Read saved at the expense of a corner by punching over the top a header by Rathbone and then had to punch away again from Wokey as the ball came across from Thomas.

GOOD GOAL BY RIOCH

The Town increased their lead in the 78th minute through a beautifully taken

goal by RIOCH, who, receiving a good crossfield pass from Whittaker, made ground and carefully placed his shot wide of Beswick.

French, moving over to the right wing, led the next Luton attack and finished with a shot which Beswick had difficulty in holding, but the goalkeeper recovered in time to save a backheader centre from Pleat.

Whittaker forced Williams into giving the Town another corner on the left from a good pass by Rioch, but Newport cleared their lines.

However, Luton still kept possession and Moore moved up into the Newport half for a left-foot shot which Beswick saved.

WHITTAKER UNLUCKY

Newport's defence was not looking too secure in the closing stages and Jardine came up in his old left-wing position to put across a centre which, unfortunately, was a little too fast for the waiting forwards.

Whittaker was desperately unlucky not to score with a great run and rising drive, which he was turned over by a fruitless corner.

Then with the seconds running out, Jardine came through with the ball, and after receiving a return pass from French, was just beaten by Beswick as he attempted to make his shot.

Beswick, who had had a busy afternoon, was called on to save again after Slough had broken through on the right and centred to Whittaker. The goalkeeper just cut the ball out before he winger reached it. Result:

LUTON 3
NEWPORT 1

Riddick had not looked happy in that position and would probably find more opportunity for lying deep in the inside-right position, which he prefers.

The ground was filling up slowly at the start and this was probably a hangover from the unfortunate two defeats last weekend.

NEWPORT'S GOOD START

Newport came here with a good record — three points from their first two league games — and they were strengthened by the inclusion of outside-right Thomas who has recovered from a foot injury which kept him out of the opening matches.

Before the start both teams lined up on the centre line to observe one minute's silence for the victims of the Yugoslavia air crash.

Newport were first to look dangerous and Thomas put a ball into the middle which

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NEWPORT PULL BACK

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