

TOWN OFF-KEY AT ROCHDALE

Nothing worked right for them

By ONLOOKER

ROCHDALE 3, LUTON TOWN 0

THIS was a game which the Town players will want to forget. They never looked anything like happy against a snappier Rochdale team that split the defence wide open by the use of the long ball.

So much were the Town under pressure, and so alarming were the gaps that were being opened in the defence that at one stage in the game they looked likely to be over-run. Then came a 25-minute stoppage when the floodlighting system failed, and when light was restored to the scene Rochdale's fire had gone out, and the Town looked more dangerous for the last 20 minutes than at any time in the game.

Rochdale's "old - head" centre-forward, Lister gave Rivers a nightmare of a match, and with the centre of the field wide open to them Rochdale had only their finishing to blame for not netting more goals.

Luton's forwards were punchless and tended to keep the ball too close and were too often caught in possession, so Williamson in the Rochdale goal was not given a lot to trouble him.

It was a bad day for the Town all-round. Nothing went right, and as so often happens on these occasions, Rochdale, who have not been impressive at home so far this season, struck a purple patch which produced two goals in two minutes in the second half when everything seemed to go in their favour.

Lister was guilty of three glaring misses in the first half when he put Rochdale straight onto the offensive and kept them there.

He missed one chance bang in front of goal in the opening minutes, hit the bar with another, and then with only Read to beat shot wide again. In addition Read saved well from Wheatley.

French and Whittaker were prominent in a couple of raids for the Town, but the attack never played together and was soon further hampered when French started limping.

FRENCH WENT OFF

However, it was Luton who had the ball in the net first through a move started by Pleat with a pass to Whittaker who sent it on to Riddick to put the ball in the net, but he was pulled up for off-side.

Rochdale went ahead in the 44th minute through a beautifully taken goal by WHEATLEY who came right through that tell-tale gap in the middle after picking up a clearance from Crossley in the middle of the field.

French was replaced by substitute Thear at the start of the second half.

Rochdale also had to make a substitution when Collins was helped off the field with a leg injury after preventing Thear from breaking through.

Moulden proved a handful with some swift raids down the wing and Read had difficulty in cutting out one of his centres.

The Town went two down in the 65th minute when following a good cross by Storf the ball went back to RUSSELL, who warded off a tackle by Jardine and went on to score with a good drive.

Straight from the kick-off Rochdale swept down the left wing to score their third through CROSSLEY who shot by Read from close range.

Then in the 70th minute a section of lighting behind Read's goal failed, and referee D. N. H. Payne of Sheffield immediately stopped the game.

There was some consultation between the referee and the Town players. For 25 minutes the players kicked about in their respective goal areas, while three times the ground was plunged into total darkness, and it was 27 minutes before, with power restored, the game was restarted with a bounced ball.

Rochdale were knocked out of their stride by the stoppage, and more of the Town forwards was seen after the re-start.

TOWN LACKED FINISH

Good work by Thomson and Pleat sent away Whittaker who was pulled up for off-side, and Thear went up with his head to challenge Williamson for a long cross, the goalkeeper just winning the tussle.

There was a lot of hard effort from Rioch, and with four minutes remaining he put in the Town's best shot of the match, a long range effort along the ground which Williamson was unable to hold cleanly.

However, time had run out for the Town, and even now their shooting was not as accurate as it might have been. Jardine shot wide following a Whittaker corner, and Rioch sent a long drive over the top in the closing minutes after Thomson had spurred a last-ditch raid for the Town.

ROCHDALE: Williamson; Smith, Calloway; Richardson; Taylor, Collins; Crossley; Russell, Lister, Wheatley; Storf, Substitute: Moulden.
LUTON TOWN: Read; Slough, Jardine; Thomson; Rivers, Moore; Pleat, French; Riddick, Rioch; Whittaker; Substitute: Thear.
Referee: D. N. H. Payne, Sheffield.

Attendance: 2,500