

TOWN CRASH AS COUNTY SLAM FOUR IN FIRST HALF

Notts forwards probe defensive gaps

By CHILTERN

LUTON TOWN 2, NOTTS COUNTY 5

LUTON TOWN looked to be heading for the heaviest defeat of the season so far when Notts County slammed four goals in the first half of this match at Kenilworth Road this afternoon. Three goals came in the first 15 minutes.

The Town's position improved slightly when Pleat scored before half-time, however, and Thear made it 4-2 after 66 minutes. But a penalty in the 80th minute shattered any hopes of a fight-back by the Town.

Yet another pleasantly sunny Saturday afternoon failed to attract the fans in any substantial numbers, even though the visitors brought something of a following.

After yet another away defeat the Town made changes which had the effect of, for one thing, giving the 19-year-old signing from Chelsea, Frank Conboy, his first outing in the Football League.

He took over at right-half from Alan Slough, who missed his first match of the season and stood by as substitute. This was the only defensive change, but there were two alterations in attack, partly designed to restore Ray Whittaker to his best position at outside-left.

Equally important was that David Pleat was introduced in an effort to bring more mobility and thrust at inside-right, and he was chosen on the strength of a couple of bright performances in the Reserves.

On the other hand, the County, now in the process of recovering from a disastrous start since some unsuccessful excursions into the transfer market were unchanged.

Among their most recent signings on view were Terry Harkin, the former Cardiff City centre-forward, and Frank Upton, the ex-Chelsea and Derby County left-half.

Also in the side was Jack Smith, who reached Nottingham via Swindon and Brighton.

The Town wore black armbands as a token of respect to Mr. G. B. Harris, a director who died during this week. Before the start both teams and the match officials lined up in the middle of the pitch to observe a minute's silence.

HEAVY PITCH

After two nights of heavy rain the pitch had recovered remarkably well, doubtless helped by the sunshine, although it looked distinctly heavy on the stand side.

There was soon something for the crowd to cheer because the Town, attacking the Kenilworth Road end, swung into their stride with a brilliant all-along-the-line movement,

TEAMS

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

NOTTS COUNTY:
Smith (G); Chalmers, Hampton; Edwards, Gibson, Upton; Bowers, Smith (J), Harkin, Beresford, Clarke. Substitute: Thompson.

Referee: Mr. C. Thomas, of Treorchy.

in which every member of the attack had had a part.

Finally, the ball was pushed out to French, who brilliantly beat Hampton and then provided an anti-climax by slamming the ball into the side netting.

NARROW ESCAPE

When the County hit back, there was quite a narrow escape for the Town whose defence seemed slow to adjust itself to a thrust by Jack Smith. The inside-right's delicately-made shot trickled just wide of the far post with

THE TIME WAS . . .

Luton's first goal this afternoon came after 41 minutes 15 seconds.

Read desperately scurrying across his goal.

Then, with four minutes gone, the County took a shock lead—and a "shocker" it was—direct from a free-kick awarded for a foul by Thomson midway in his own half.

UPTON took the kick and I fancy had no more hope than the man in the moon that he would score. In fact, the ball was obviously punted hopefully into the penalty area.

At least two defenders and Riddick in particular could have cleared but the ball was allowed to run on, left for Read who was totally un-

prepared for it, and it bounced tamely into the net off the inside of a post.

TURNOF SPEED

It was a case of complete lack of understanding and obviously no-one made the necessary decisive shout. Certainly, the Town could not afford to "gift" goals away in such prodigal fashion.

Worse was to follow because County became two up after eight minutes with, in this case, HARKIN being left with the easy task of tapping the ball over the line. This opening was created by Bowers, who showed a fast turn of speed in beating Jardine before bringing the ball along the deadline.

FIGHTING BACK

Naturally enough the Town were shaken by the turn of events and for a time County looked much the more dangerous. Then, as the Town began their fight back, Pleat was pulled down inches outside the penalty area, and from the free kick he headed into the hands of George Smith.

Immediately after this a race by Harkin down the middle could have led to further disaster because Riddick made a casual sort of back-pass to Read, who was already on his way out, and the goalkeeper stopped the ball only with some difficulty and off balance.

One or two bouts of the slow handclap developed, though it was a little early for such drastic treatment, though Moore didn't help matters by backing the ball well wide first time from just outside the penalty area.

However, it seemed that the Town were not to recover from their dreadful start, because with the game only a quarter of an hour old the County became three up, with HARKIN again the scorer. This time he beat Read from a pass by Beresford, who had had the better of Conboy in a tussle for the ball.

Altogether the Town defence was not inspiring any confidence at all and there was a strange lack of understanding.

Certainly these hammer blows took a great deal of the stuffing out of the town, and there should have been another goal to the County when Jack Smith went



Moore, who went off injured after 25 minutes. Slough substituted.

through a gaping hole in defence and was stopped only by the quick emergence of Read.

At the outset of this raid Moore was injured and there was a stoppage while he received attention.

FACIAL INJURY

Rioch also had a knock earlier on, and during the stoppage was rubbing his left knee. Moore, who had a facial injury, was able to carry on, though he looked on the shaky side.

In fact, he signalled to Rioch to come back and moved to outside-left, with Whittaker switching inside, obviously in an attempt to



David Pleat scored for the Town after 41 minutes.

give himself more time to recover completely.

Immediately, though, Moore was in action, gaining a corner, which he took himself, not very well, though twice in quick succession the ball went straight back to him.

Vainly so far the Town were fighting to regain some semblance of form and the best effort so far was a long-range one by Conboy, which reached George Smith somewhat awkwardly on the bounce.

Then with 25 minutes gone Moore came off and Slough

The goals

UPTON for Notts County after 4 minutes.
HARKIN for Notts County after 8 minutes.
HARKIN for Notts County after 15 minutes.
UPTON for Notts County after 35 minutes.
PLEAT for Luton after 41 minutes.
THEAR for Luton after 66 minutes.
GIBSON (penalty) for Notts County after 80 minutes.

went on as substitute, taking over at left-half.

Then Slough made a brave attempt to make his mark on this game quickly by picking up a ball in midfield and letting fly a drive that George Smith had to push hastily behind.

Then the goalkeeper went up to cut out Whittaker's corner kick, was charged by Thear, but the referee ruled against Town claims for a goal.

A SLOW RE-ACTION

A possible chance of the Town improving their parlous position went astray when Rioch didn't re-act quickly enough following good work by Whittaker, and then in a sharp break to the other end, with the Town defence faltering again, Harkin, from the outside-left position, went within inches of completing a hat-trick.

DANGEROUS ATTEMPTS

This apart, most of the dangerous scoring attempts were coming from Notts, and Read made a smart save from a drive by Jack Smith.

Read, with 35 minutes gone, was picking the ball out of the back of the net for the fourth time.

Scorer was UPTON, who picked up a loose ball, had room in which to begin a long run, and beat Read as he was tackled with a drive from fully 25 yards.

Apart from a long-ranged shot by Whittaker which George Smith was able to watch drift harmlessly wide of the post, the Town were not much in it.

Then they did score through PLEAT after 41 minutes, when the inside-right hooked into the roof of the net a cross by French. He took his chance very well indeed.

Half-time:

LUTON 1
NOTTS COUNTY ... 4

The Town began the second half with Rioch, heavily strapped just above his left knee, at outside-left, Whittaker moving inside.

This cutting down of Rioch's mobility, legacy of an injury early in the game, certainly did not help the Town's hopes of staging an effective revival.

However, they made ground in convincing fashion, and French made an accurate centre that George Smith cut

out before the onrushing Thear could intervene.

A heavy tackle by Upton on Pleat brought the Town a free-kick some ten yards or so outside the penalty area. Whittaker placed the ball quite well and Thear was unsuccessful in an ambitious attempt to turn the ball over his head.

LIMP MORE PRONOUNCED

Rioch's limp was more pronounced now and the fact that he was reduced virtually to a hobbling passenger was a huge slice of bad luck.

A couple of free kicks against the County did not aid the Town's cause appreciably, and then County went on to the attack with Upton going through in manner reminiscent of the run that led up to his second goal. This time with a firm tackle Slough was too good for him.

Now the County were threatening to get back into their first-half rhythm and were beginning to worry the Town defence again. Fortunately the covering in this department was a little more adequate than it had been earlier.

A push in the back by Conboy on Beresford brought the County a free-kick near the centre circle and as they prepared to take this the slow

handclap broke out spasmodically again.

BETTER THINGS

Then better things happened to the Town in the 66th minute when THEAR put them back in the game with at least a glimmer of hope. This time slack marking by the County defence was responsible and they waited for an offside decision when Rioch pushed the ball down the middle.

There was no signal and Thear about whom their was no doubt that he was onside went through quickly and as George Smith advanced smacked the ball firmly just inside the post.

This encouraged the Town, who came back again strongly and Pleat, shooting left-footed for just inside the penalty area, was a yard wide.

It was now the turn of the County's defence to look uneasy.

Upton brought down Pleat heavily, and was booked by the referee. The free-kick was cleared direct to Slough, whose long-range shot soared too high.

Read was next in serious action, falling to cut out dangerous centre by Bowers. Then came complete anti-climax with a penalty for the County, conceded completely unnecessarily by Riddick. He was barely inside the penalty area when he put up his hands to pull down a pass by Upton that was going nowhere in particular and certainly carried no threat at all.

Immediately, the referee pointed to the penalty spot, and GIBSON scored easily. This was after 80 minutes.

Once or twice the Town mounted raids that looked as if they might bring success as when Thear tried to battle a way through.

With a couple of minutes left Upton almost put through his own goal when he turned the ball over following a free-kick on the right.

Result:
LUTON T 2
NOTTS C 5