

TOWN BACK ON THE VICTORY TRAIL

IN MUDDY BATTLE

Bruce Rioch is star of the forward line

10-12-66

By CHILTERN

PARADING Max Dougan, their new centre-half, Luton Town looked a much better proposition than they did in their calamitous match at Lincoln, and were well set for victory over Chesterfield at Kenilworth Road this afternoon.

Whittaker gave them the lead after 25 minutes, Billy Stark, the former Luton player levelled the score a minute before the interval, Bruce Rioch put the Town ahead again with 29 minutes to go.

The fact that the game was in some doubt seemed certain to have had an effect on the attendance, despite the fact that the Town paraded Max Dougan, their new signing from Leicester City.

In fact, the side they fielded looked the strongest they had had out for some weeks.

Ray Whittaker, recovered from injury, returned to outside left, and after his bout of illness, Graham French was on the right wing.

Chesterfield welcomed back their leading scorer, tall centre-forward Ivan Hollett,

cleared by banging the ball into touch.

ESCAPE FOR CHESTERFIELD

Chesterfield had a narrow escape when Riddick tried to head in a free kick by Slough. Osborne threw himself full-length to scoop the ball away, and only just missed the on-rushing Pleat.

The players were having great difficulty in dragging the ball through the quagmire, and many passes were falling short.

A sweeping movement by the Town nearly led to the downfall of the Chesterfield goal. Pleat plied Rioch, whose low centre zipped across the face of the goal, but French, running in, could do no more than turn it into the side netting.

Passing back was a very dangerous business indeed, as Neale almost found to his cost when he slipped the ball to Osborne, for Rioch nearly intercepted.

Then, a back pass by Thomson nearly proved disastrous for Town. It nearly let in Randall, who himself could not gather the ball in the treacherous going, and Town escaped.

RIOCH'S SHOOTING SHOWS THE WAY

Rioch was particularly noticeable in these early stages, and he showed the way with a quick first-time shot taken with his right foot that lifted only just too high.

Again, Rioch was on the mark, this time left-footed, from just outside the penalty area, and Osborne did well to push the ball somewhat hurriedly over the bar.

Chesterfield kept pegging away, with their inside forward trio switching about, and Stark found for himself an open space through which he tested Read.

Stark had a good chance to put Chesterfield ahead from bang in front of goal, but missed the ball completely from a centre by Holmes.

Osborne was next in action, falling on a centre from French, who had cleverly outwitted Sears. French was showing neat footwork, but was tending to overdo it.

Next opportunity fell to the Town, and should have been accepted by Riddick after he had snapped up a pass by Moore. He controlled the ball



Bruce Rioch made his mark on today's game with his progressive ideas and his shooting. It was from his pass that Ray Whittaker put Town ahead after 25 minutes. Rioch later scored Town's second goal, a header after 61 minutes' play.

Rioch got his second goal after 69 minutes.

beautifully, and then provided an anti-climax by pulling it wide from a good position.

Town, however, took the lead after 25 minutes through WHITTAKER.

It was well taken, because the winger, just inside the penalty area, pulled down most capably a pass by Rioch and then lobbed the ball with his right foot well wide of Osborne's left hand.

TOWN WELL ON TOP NOW

Chesterfield's defence was soon in further trouble and following a corner-kick taken by French, Moore, following up, should have increased Town's lead, but sliced his shot wide.

Town were well on top now, and were desperately unlucky when a header by Riddick struck the underpart of the angle of the woodwork, and came back into play to be scrambled away.

Then Slough shot just too high as the Town pressure continued following a pass by French.

With Town swarming to the attack, Chesterfield were now packing their defence. Osborne appeared to be feeling an injury to his right ankle, and

there was a hold-up while he was given attention.

After looking as if they might be overwhelmed, Chesterfield broke, but without making much progress.

Town came back and a drive by French passed the wrong side of the post.

Once again, Chesterfield broke away, and gained a corner from which Read picked up a low cross by Wilson.

Chesterfield were now beginning to look a little more dangerous, and Read saved a dangerous situation by coming out and falling on a through pass by Stark that was earmarked for Hollett.

Quickfire work by Moore and Whittaker suddenly launched another Town attack and from an acute angle Rioch blazed away at goal, only to find the brave Osborne throwing himself full-length and clawing the ball to safety.

Certainly, Osborne had been far busier than had Read.

Again Osborne was in action, this time from a hard drive by Whittaker, who was once more sent away in fine style by Rioch.

STARK GETS EQUALISER

Town's pressure was persistent as half-time approached, but a minute from the interval Chesterfield broke away and equalised with a surprise goal from STARK.

He picked up a loose ball fully 25 yards from goal, and made a lobbed sort of shot that deceived Read, who was too far out of his goal and the ball went into the net off the underside of the bar.

Immediately afterwards, Town appealed without effect when Rioch was thrown out of his stride as he went through.

Half-time:

LUTON TOWN 1
CHESTERFIELD 1

After an initial raid by the Town at the start of the second half, there was a hold-up while Riddick received attention after being winded.

A threatening attack by Chesterfield in which Wilson was allowed a clear run was

How the goals came

WHITTAKER for Luton after 25 minutes.

STARK for Chesterfield after 44 minutes.

RIOCH for Luton after 61 minutes.

STARK for Chesterfield after 69 minutes.

RIOCH for Luton after 72 minutes.

nipped in the bud by Slough, but then Read had to throw himself flat on his face in the mud to keep out a free kick.

Chesterfield now were on the attack, and it needed a firm tackle by Moore inside his own penalty area to stop a determined bid by Hollett.

HARASSING TIME FOR TOWN'S DEFENCE

A shot by Tait struck Moore and ballooned over the bar. Town's defence was having harassing minutes in the face of all-out Chesterfield attacks.

When the Town broke clear, Rioch was fouled by Neale, and Riddick, racing in hard to meet Whittaker's free kick, headed it too high.

The surface had become even more bog-like now, and it was something of a feat even to kick the ball with any sureness.

It was pretty much of a scramble, and it could scarcely be other, in the conditions.

TOWN USING OFFSIDE TRAP

Town's defence was moving sharply up and repeatedly catching the Chesterfield forwards offside.

Hands against Hughes brought a well placed free kick by Whittaker, but Riddick's shot went straight to Osborne.

Hughes had his name taken for throwing the ball out of play after the Town had been awarded a free-kick for a foul by Anderson. The kick brought a rush on the Chesterfield goal, but nothing more.

Meanwhile, Slough, who had been in at the start of the movement, stayed down after receiving a painful kick, and needed attention before he could resume.

Trouble then broke out be-

tween Sears and French. Chesterfield protested when the referee awarded Town a free kick. At the same time, the referee had a word with French.

TOWN IN FRONT AGAIN

Then, with 61 minutes gone, the Town regained the lead through RIOCH.

It was a clean-cut goal, which began with Pleat sending away Whittaker. Rioch came racing up for the centre and glanced the ball with his head into the net in the face of a rush of defenders and a challenge by Osborne.

In the next minute, Rioch, from a similar sort of position very nearly snatched another goal, again from a Whittaker cross. This time Osborne just forestalled him, but could not avoid conceding a corner that unfortunately Whittaker placed behind.



Former Luton player Billy Stark levelled the scores a minute from the interval with a long-range surprise shot.

This goal brought a return of confidence by the Town, and after Pleat had shot too high from the edge of the penalty area, Whittaker sent the ball skidding across the face of the goal.

Then, when Chesterfield put back, they were allowed to go on when they appeared offside, and STARK equalised for the second time, after 69 minutes.

He blazed the ball hard past Read after it had fallen loose in the goalmouth from Wilson's corner.

However, Chesterfield's jubilation did not last long because they in front for the third time through RIOCH.

He was left with a point-blank shot, Dougan had swung a free-kick into the goalmouth Pleat pushing the ball to the inside-left.

This was followed by a period of all-out Luton attack in which Slough produced a rasping drive that Osborne pulled from under the bar.

Chesterfield were not done, however, and were causing Town's defence untold difficulty.

At the other end, Riddick went racing through, and Osborne came out nearly to the edge of the penalty area to deprive the centre-forward of an apparently certain goal.

DOUGAN JOINS THE ATTACK

Dougan went up to join Town's attack with a clever dribble and pass to Whittaker, and was racing up for the return until the ball went out of play.

Chesterfield fought back, and Read came out to slither at the feet of Randall without gaining the ball. Fortunately, for Town it ran for a goal-kick.

There were visions of a penalty to Town when Rioch was pulled down, but the referee awarded an indirect free kick.

Rioch next found French with a well-judged pass, and from the winger's centre Riddick headed too high.

When Chesterfield fought back they were caught offside, a decision with which they heartily disagreed.

In almost the last minute, a shot by Pleat forced Osborne to save at full-stretch. Result:

LUTON TOWN 3
CHESTERFIELD 2

It was a pitch battle

By CHILTERN

LUTON TOWN'S ground staff had to work hard to get the pitch fit for this afternoon's match with Chesterfield. Even the referee lent a hand.

There was a grave doubt this morning whether the match would be played.

Heavy rain all night and for much of the morning had left the pitch badly waterlogged. There were large patches of surface water in front of the main stand and in the penalty area at the Oak Road end.

First inspection by referee Ken Wynn, of Wolverhampton, came around 12.30. Things

looked very dubious at that time, though forking was going on as quickly as possible.

Gumbooted Mr. Wynn went all over the playing area, and also took a turn with the fork until just before 1 p.m., when he said he would make a further inspection an hour later.

He said that any more rain would make play impossible.

REFEREE KICKS A BALL ABOUT

Well before two o'clock Mr. Wynn was out again on the pitch, which was still being forked, and he and a linesman kicked a

ball to each other across the Oak Road goalmouth.

The ball did not travel easily, but the referee seemed satisfied, and then indicated that the match could go on.

Almost immediately afterwards, the Chesterfield team arrived.

Water still lay on the surface in some parts.

Certainly conditions were bad, but I thought they were slightly better than those in which the recent Cup replay with Exeter was played.

A drying wind helped a little, but obviously this game was going to be as much a trial of strength as anything else.