

ROVERS FIGHT BACK AFTER KEVAN GIVES TOWN LEAD

Cup hopes dashed as

Rovers score three

By CHILTERN

TWO fine headers by Derek Kevan midway through the first half put the Town in a commanding position, but Bristol Rovers fought back strongly after the interval in this FA Cup second round tie this afternoon.

In a dramatic change of fortunes, the home side piled on the pressure in the second half and with four minutes to go the Town found themselves losing 3-2.

After all the scares yesterday, when at one time it seemed absolutely certain that the game would be frozen off, the Eastville pitch was in better condition than any the Town have seen for weeks thanks to an easing of the Arctic conditions, which began around midday yesterday.

Then snow turned to slight rain and the pitch gradually thawed out so that although it was firm in places it was soft enough on top to take a stud grip.

The trains caused the Town some anxiety this morning. First the one on which they travelled from Luton, lost its way.

They caught the Bristol train from Paddington only after a hurried dash by taxis.

KEVAN MISSED THE TRAIN

Then it was found that Derek Kevan, who was to join up with them at Paddington after travelling by train from Peterborough, was not there. The party had to travel without him but all was well because he caught the next train and arrived at the ground with 40 minutes to spare.

Bobby Thomson satisfied everybody that he had recovered from groin strain, so that he took over again at right back, and Frank Conboy, who was a standby, became the substitute. Utility player Alan Rivers also travelled.

Rovers made a surprise change, introducing the Aylesbury-born wing-half Ray Mabbutt at outside-left, in place of Ronaldson; 19-year-old Laurie Taylor made his debut in goal for the injured Bernard Hall.

Obviously the attendance was badly affected by the counter-attraction at Ashton, where the City were meeting Wolves, but the Town brought a very strong following indeed. I counted ten coaches from Luton in the car park before the match and other supporters travelled by car and rail.

WRONG SIDE OF THE POST

In the first minute the Town attacked and French tried a speculative shot aimed at providing an early test for young Taylor but the ball whipped the wrong side of a

TEAMS

BRISTOL ROVERS: Taylor; Hillard, Parsons; Williams, Davis, Stone; Jarman, Brown, Biggs, Plumb, Mabbutt. Substitute, Munro.

TOWN: Read; Thomson, Jardine, Riddick, Dougan, Moore; French, Kevan, Pleat, Rioch, Whittaker. Substitute: Conboy.

Referee: H. G. New, of Portsmouth.

post with the goalkeeper full-length.

Next, Moore came through menacingly after Read had cleared a centre by Mabbutt, but delayed his pass a little too long so that Whittaker was caught offside.

Thus early, it became evident that the Town had evolved a defensive plan which had Riddick employed to mark Biggs, and gave Dougan the role of sweeper up.

Pleat came through strongly and made another attempt to test Taylor, but again the shot was just wide.

The Town plan was to bring this young goalkeeper into action as often as possible. —Moore tried to do so with a long-range attempt which, again, was off the target.

Rovers made several attacks that looked dangerous and Read had to go full length to head a drive by Brown.

LIVELY START

It had been a lively start, giving promise of all the traditional Cup thrills. In turn French and Whittaker were checked as they embarked on ambitious runs. Rovers made ground, with Mabbutt making a perfect centre from the corner flag, and it was as well that Read reacted quickly to come out and pluck the ball off the head of Biggs.

Rovers were now slightly the more dangerous and Dougan had to give away a corner to stop Jarman, and from this Biggs headed the ball downwards, wide of the far post.

A foul by Thomson on Mabbutt led to the ball being swung into the Town goal-mouth again, and Dougan heading clear. At this stage, too many of the Town's for-

ward passes were going straight through to Taylor and for the moment they were unable to mount persistent pressure.

Then French came into it with a dribble in which he was brought down. This brought the Town a free-kick 10 yards outside the penalty area. Whittaker took it, tried his luck at goal, but was much too high.

KEVAN HEADER SCORES

Then in the 19th minute the Town took the lead with a great goal by KEVAN. The early work was done in mid-field by Moore. He drove the ball through strongly before pushing it on to Pleat, who could have pushed it outside to Whittaker, but who instead elected to centre.

This was the right thing to do—the ball sped unerringly to Kevan who had taken up a perfect position and he headed it with deadly accuracy into the far corner of the net, well out of the reach of the diving Taylor.

The Town were really on top now and after Taylor came racing outside his penalty area to clear first from Rioch, then Pleat. Kevan had terrible luck with another header from a centre by French that struck the outside of the near post and went behind.

Then the Town scored again after 25 minutes and again it was KEVAN whose head did the trick, beating Taylor again with a perfectly judged nod as the ball came across from Rioch.

A corner to the Town on the left brought a first-time shot from French that might have tested Taylor to the full had it not struck Parsons en route.

ROVERS' STRONG COME-BACK

Rovers, shaken at first by these two goals, came back strongly and gained a free-kick out on the left when Thomson pulled down Mabbutt. This produced a somewhat inelegant but effective punting, one-handed, by Read, and that was the end of that particular threat.

Kevan had been shaken up by a heavy charge, but carried on without attention, and it was Whittaker who was next in the picture with a shot from an angle which just clipped the outside of it, woodwork. Still the Town continued to be menacing, getting the Rovers' defence in a series of tangles. Kevan, faced with an awkward bounce, shot over



Derek Kevan, whose two goals in four minutes gave the Town a great start at Bristol.

following more strong work by Rioch.

Rovers did get the ball into the net through Plumb, but it was promptly disallowed because Jarman had carried the ball out of play.

Then the Town came back again with Moore sending away French, who gained a corner. This French took left-footed and Riddick came up to try to use his height, but Taylor cut the ball out confidently.

The Town were moving the ball about with precision. Whittaker brought the next Town raid and the ball remained at the Rovers' end for some time before finally Plumb set the home team going—only for Dougan to throw them back.

A misunderstanding between Read and Jardine led to the Rovers having a corner on their right, and this was followed by another on the other flank.

DING-DONG STRUGGLE

It was a ding-dong struggle, but the Town were playing confident, smooth football and had control of the middle of the field.

Towards half-time the Rovers tried desperately to improve their position, but were finding the Town defence both cool and resourceful and giving nothing away.

Read easily pulled down a centre by Jarman, but the Rovers came again, and it was Dougan who stopped them by coolly heading behind for a corner when there was imminent danger. From this the ball ran loose in front of goal, and Read fell on it. Half-time.

BRISTOL ROVERS... 2 TOWN... 0

Rovers began with an all-out attack which brought them a corner, headed clear by Dougan, but the ball was returned and it was Jardine who came out with it.

A free kick helped the Rovers to keep up the pressure and another came near the corner flag when Jardine

upended Mabbutt. Obviously the Rovers' half-time instructions had been to throw in everything for an early goal.

This was a crucial period for the Town, but they refused to be flustered. They came back into the game as an attacking force with a raid that was ended when Kevan was penalised for a foul.

Rovers were still very busy in attack and a couple of mistakes in front of goal brought them a corner which Jarman placed behind to give the defence some welcome respite.

BOUNCED WIDE OF POST

There was a narrow escape when Biggs and Mabbutt went for a high ball together, and it bounced off Biggs' head just wide of the post.

Following the free-kick there was some evidence of regrouping by the Town and a flowing movement ended with Whittaker putting the ball behind.

The fortunes of this game had swung quite dramatically in the Rovers' favour as a result of their all-out attacking tactics.

French set Luton hearts beating faster by dribbling inside his own penalty area, but came out with the ball safely.

At last the Town swept downfield and after Rioch had a shot blocked, Whittaker centred for Kevan to meet the ball deliberately for his head and aim for the far corner. This time Taylor was fully prepared and made a diving save.

SWINGING TOWN'S WAY AGAIN

Things began to swing the Town's way again with Thomson joining the attack, as a result of which French gained a corner, and the immediate danger to the Town's lead seemed to have passed.

French's cross was half cleared so that he was able to centre again, and Kevan, who bundled in to try to meet the ball, was again penalised.

In the next Rovers raid Read threw himself at the feet of Plumb, who followed through with his boot and was rightly pulled up.

Having survived that early fire from the Rovers and the ferocious pressure it was—the Town were now beginning to settle down into something like their sparkling form of the first half.

Whittaker made a fine run, only to fall victim to a third opponent. Then with Rovers probing away again a dangerous through pass by Plumb was brilliantly intercepted by Read throwing himself full-length as Biggs raced through.

Taylor did extremely well to cut out a hard low cross by Kevan.

In the 69th minute the Rovers scored a goal. It was a spectacular effort, scored by WILLIAMS, who flashed away at a centre made by Jarman on the left. From just inside the penalty area he let the ball come to him as it dropped and it flew towards goal, dipping just under the bar by the angle of the woodwork and just beating the despairing Read.

There had a close thing when Read had to push out a cross by Jarman. From the corner there was a tremendous rush and another came near the corner flag when Jardine

behind for safety. This time

Read cut out the corner.

Rovers were in full cry now

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## How the goals came

**KEVAN** for Luton after 19 minutes.

**KEVAN** for Luton after 23 minutes.

**WILLIAMS** for Bristol Rovers after 69 minutes.

**DAVIS** for Bristol after 84 minutes.

**JARMAN** for Bristol after 86 minutes.

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and swept in again and Read had to make a great save, diving forward from Jarman.

With just over a quarter of an hour to go, the pressure was really on the Town, with Rovers gaining another corner and all the Town players packing the penalty area to help out.

This was cleared, but Rovers kept battering away in search of the equaliser, with the Town breaking out frequently, as Dougan came through with the ball to use it well.

Then Kevan raised Luton hopes with a typical dash down the middle before he found the ball running badly for him and had to pass to French, whose cross was picked up by Taylor.

There was certainly danger in these Town thrusts, but also in the Rovers' more concerted pressure.

ROVERS SNATCH EQUALISER

This was exciting, pulsating stuff now, with Rovers back on the attack, again and Thomson being forced to concede a corner. And it was from this that the Rovers equalised amid great scenes of enthusiasm after 84 minutes.

Mabbutt's corner came across unerringly, there was a rush for the ball and somehow or another it dropped



loose at the feet of **DAVIS**, who netted from three yards.

Two minutes later and the Town were in arrears for the first time when in another all-out attack **JARMAN** somehow or other squeezed the ball into the net between Read and the near post.

The consternation and disappointment of the Town defenders was all too plain and several of them hung their heads in sheer exasperation.

These two blows seemed to have killed the Town's hopes stone dead, although Rioch made a brave but abortive effort to break through.

With the ground a cauldron of excitement now and the Rovers supporters — so depressed before — now cock-a-hoop, the Town seemed to have shot their bolt. Results:

BRISTOL ROVERS ... 3

LUTON 2