

HIGH DRAMA —AND TOWN GO OUT

66/67
(FAC)
BRISTOL ROVERS 3, LUTON TOWN 2

NEVER will the Town come closer to earning the coveted place in the third round of the FA cup than they did at Bristol this afternoon when, until six minutes from the end, they were in the lead and looked firmly set for further progress then found their hopes completely dashed by two goals in three minutes — the last coming with only four minutes left.

Such was the high drama for 8,480 fans at this grimly-fought match.

From the time when two beautifully-headed goals by Derek Kevan put the Town firmly ahead, I never thought they would lose this one. In fact, they looked all set for their first away win since far-off April.

They would have deserved it, too, but in the end they could not quite hold out against the ferocity of the Rovers' raids.

The Town gave the Rovers a first-half lesson. Their football flowed, Kevan was an ever-present source of danger, and their lead, with a little luck, could have been greater than 2-0 at half-time.

Two muddy splashes on the outside of a post bear witness to this — it was there that scoring efforts by Kevan and Whittaker came to grief.

They came back with renewed force at the start of the second half, but the Town held out without undue trouble, and I thought the danger period was over.

Back into the game the Town came, but in the 69th minute, Williams scored a fortunate goal with a shot that could conceivably have gone anywhere. The Rovers were back in the game.

I think the Town can consider themselves desperately unlucky not to have the chance of another crack at the Rovers.

Both the last two goals were close-range affairs and there was a definite suspicion that Read left the gap and the near post unguarded when the winner came.

But in view of the great display put up by the Town, criticism really is not called for — had they gone for a draw it would have been hailed as one of the best performances of the round!

Some hint of the Rovers' second-half desperation can be gleaned from the fact that their first goal came from a half-back and the second from their centre-half in the role of attacker.

It was poor reward for the Town defence in which I thought Dougan and Moore stood out, but in which everybody played his part, especially Pleat, who seems to be made to measure for this midfield role.

Forward, there was always Kevan, willing to try to batter his way through, and almost succeeding on several occasions, and French and Whittaker to supply the threat from the wings.

Rioch fought hard, too.

To be so near to success and to see it snatched away must be a bitter experience indeed.