

BILLY'S BOYS OFFER TIGHT DEFENSIVE BARRIER

—but Town's attack hammers away

By CHILTERN

TOWN were finding their home match against Southport, the Billy Bingham Boys, a frustrating experience. They were doing nearly all the attacking, but were being met by a tight defence.

Once or twice, Southport were lucky to escape, but they succeeded in turning round with the goal sheet still blank. Graham French, in fine form seemed Town's best hope of success.

After all, Southport Manager Billy Bingham, the former Luton outside-right star, did not manage to sign another ex-Luton player, centre - forward George Andrews, from Cardiff in time for this afternoon's match at Kenilworth Road.

However, Billy told me that he is confident the deal will go through on Monday. In the circumstances, he relied on the 12 players he nominated yesterday, but did a reshuffle.

He introduced Clarke at left-half, moved Alty to inside-right, and switched Spence to the wing. All this added up to the fact that Price was the odd man out, and became the substitute.

Obviously, the moves were designed to infuse more punch into an attack that has been mostly goal-shy recently, for Alty is a strong, direct type of player.

TOWN'S ENFORCED TEAM CHANGES

Changes were forced on the Town because of the unfitness, through injury, of Bruce Rieoch and John Moore. Into the attack for the first time this season came goalkeeper Tony Read, who, of course, is no stranger to the front line.

He teamed up on the left wing with Ray Whittaker, returning after recovery from illness.

The vacancy left by Moore was filled by moving Slough from the right, where Riddick took over. Pleat, in and out of the team recently, wore the No. 9 shirt.

A heavy shower three-quarters of an hour before kick-off time probably had an adverse effect on the attendance, but it soon passed, and the sun was shining just before the start.

After its heavy soaking early in the week, the pitch looked reasonable, having been rolled flat, but it was obviously very heavy, though the rain might well have lived it up.

Jardine won the toss, and the Town defended the Kenilworth Road end. There was pressure from the Town right from the start, with

Southport immediately dropping into a 4-3-3 formation and obviously attempting to ensure that there were no gaps in front of goal.

WHITTAKER TWICE DANGEROUS

With Whittaker wandering into the middle, he was twice dangerous near goal, once when he nearly intercepted a

translation of the fact that numbers mean next to nothing in relation to positions on the field these days.

Another ambitious run by Jardine took him right up to the dead-ball line, and eventually the ball was pushed out to Whittaker, who produced the best attempt so far—a shot that flashed just wide.

When Southport did get away with some sort of threat, it followed a free-kick by Parker that was headed behind, but the corner brought nothing, nor did an ambitious sort of long pass by Whittaker in the direction of Read, when the Town broke out again.

TWO ESCAPES FOR SOUTHPORT

With French earning a corner, Southport escaped narrowly twice in as many minutes, first when Kevan headed the ball goalwards and it was scooped off the line, and then when French centred again and Read missed the ball in the air with the net yawning invitingly in front of him.

This game was developing much on the pattern of the previous home match against Wrexham, when it took the Town a long time in which to penetrate a defence in depth.

TOWN MAKING THE RUNNING

They were still making nearly all the running, without making a real impression, though they seemed to be unfortunate to have appeals for a penalty turned down when Peat appeared to handle a centre by French.

Still, the Town pressure continued, and Parker, somewhat dangerously, stretched out a leg to stop a shot by Whittaker that was going through to Reeves.

Then, a French free-kick brought the nearest approach to a goal, because after there had been a scuffle in the Southport goalmouth, the ball was crossed again, and with his head Read flashed the ball inches too high.

Still, the Town's superiority continued, with the ball frequently sent into the goalmouth, but just as often cleared before a direct shot could be made.

REEVES HAD TO BE SMART

Even so, Reeves had to go down promptly to keep out a low cross from Whittaker, and then came a free-kick ten yards outside the penalty area

when Molyneux pulled down Kevan. This was pushed to Whittaker, whose shot hit a crowd of players, as did a cross immediately afterwards from Jardine, and an attempted shot by Thomson that was deflected for a corner.

From this, well placed by French, Read swung away at the ball first time, only once again to find it ricocheting off the forest of legs.

There followed a great effort by French, who made a rising drive, which Reeves could only punch into the air, and there seemed grave danger that the ball would curl under the bar until the goalkeeper suddenly turned and pushed it over, despite being harassed by Riddick. Before the corner kick could be taken there was a stoppage for repairs to Molyneux.

A CHANCE FOR JARDINE

There was a distinct chance for Jardine when Peat, clearing a centre by Whittaker, sent the ball straight to him, but unfortunately it went to the full-back's right foot, and his shot went straight at Reeves.

It was over half an hour before Southport could be said to be really dangerous. Then Fryatt tried a solo run to be caught at a critical moment by Dougan, who conceded a corner, from which Spence sent high over.

This was followed by a shock for the Town when Alty, from getting on for 30 yards, made a shot that seemed to deceive Swan, who must have been considerably relieved to see the ball bounce against a post and go to safety.

ONLY INCHES WIDE OF A POST

In return, Whittaker produced a speculative shot that went just too high, with Reeves watching the ball anxiously.

Southport were beginning to break out into attack somewhat more frequently, but nearly always they were outnumbered, because they had not abandoned the depth of their defensive formation.

A foul on Kevan by Molyneux brought a free-kick that was not well placed by Whittaker, but even so Riddick gained possession just inside the penalty area, and, turning quickly, missed a post by inches.

Under some pressure, Dougan had to give away a corner, from which Fryatt headed the ball goalwards, where Spence got a foot to it, and there was a joint clearance by Thomson and Swan.

Just before half-time Kevan had his name taken for barging into Russell. Half-time:

LUTON		0
SOUTHPORT		0

It had been a first half of almost complete frustration for the Town, who had done just about everything but score.

First dangerous move after the interval came from Southport, with Russell trying a drive from 25 yards that went uncomfortably close, although Swan seemed to have it covered.

There was a prompt reply by the Town, with French rounding Cairns and making a high shot that Reeves punched away somewhat sketchily, and then Pleat broke through an unaccustomed gap in the Southport defence, but had not quite the speed to reach the ball before Reeves.

TOO MANY PASSES BEING MADE

A rather laboured Town attack in which too many passes were effected, ended with Read heading the ball tamely into Reeves's hands, and then there was a spasm for Southport, most of whose shooting was coming from long range. Alty tried one, it hit someone and went for a corner despite a desperate dive by Swan.

Kevan tried to improve matters with a left-footed shot which did little more than tickle through to Reeves, who then had to go up to pick out of the air a long centre from Whittaker, with Kevan in close attendance.

If anyone was going to win this match it looked likely to be French, who again brought Reeves into violent action with a left-footed drive that the goalkeeper was happy to punch one-handed for a corner, which he did well to catch in the face of opposition.

A CHANCE FOR SOUTHPORT

A chance for Southport came when Swan came out for a centre from the right and could only push the ball out to Smith, who was much too hurried with his effort, and the ball went well over the top.

Then, a corner for the Town, splendidly placed by French, brought panic stations in the Southport defence, during which Jardine was unlucky, in that the ball, going straight to him, was deflected. In the end, all he could do was to lob the ball into the goal, and it was scrambled away for a corner. French did not appear to realise that play had been stopped, perhaps because he thought the ball had not crossed the line, because he carried on playing, and, in the face of some half-hearted attempts at tackles, rammed the ball into the roof of the net.

It was no goal, obviously, because the referee had plainly indicated this decision.

When the corner was taken eventually, the Southport goal escaped near miraculously. At least three point-blank shots cannoned off defenders as the Town forwards, reinforced by Jardine and Riddick, sought to hammer home their great territorial advantage.

Apart from anything else, the ball was not really running kindly for them in front of goal, and it all ended with Reeves saving from Whittaker.

FRENCH AGAIN DANGEROUS

Again French was dangerous when he veered into the middle to make a left-footed shot, whose direction Kevan tried to change by meeting it with his head, but unfortunately the ball reached him too fast for him to be accurate, and finished too high.

Another appeal for a penalty for hands against Spence, who stopped a centre from French, was turned down, the referee obviously taking the view that it was unintentional, but it was a matter of disappointment to the Town for all that.

So much on top were the Town that Dougan was often going up to join in the attack, and one of his sorties brought a free kick which was kicked out again from packed defence to Slough, whose first-time effort was well off the mark.

Try as they did, the Town just could not get the elusive goal, though there is not much doubt that they should not have been in this position. There was half a chance when a long free kick reached Kevan, but he had his back to the goal and could not turn quickly enough before being dispossessed.

Riddick made a promising run down the left wing and then spoilt everything by turning the ball straight to a defender.

Southport made a break, with Smith providing a dangerous centre that Slough had to head behind for safety.

A run by Jardine gained a corner from which the ball dropped at the feet of Kevan, but his shot struck the wall of defenders.

Southport were, in sight of a point now and obviously were going to do their best to see they hung on to it.

SOUTHPORT EMERGE

Southport were now beginning to look more dangerous, and Swan had some difficulty in pushing for a corner a difficult shot by Alty. A bad clearance by Dougan sent the ball to Parker, who was only just too high with an effort from 25 yards.

Southport were definitely more in the game now, but whenever the Town gained midfield possession, there was the same quick mass funneling back into defence.

With three minutes left, Molyneux cleared off the goal-line, with Reeves beaten for once by Kevan. Southport showed no sign of yielding, despite all sorts of attempts by the Town to open them up.

Result:

LUTON TOWN	...	0
SOUTHPORT		0