

LATE GOAL ROBS THE TOWN IN HARD FIGHT

By CHILTERN

HARTLEPOOLS 2, LUTON TOWN 1

LUTON TOWN came close to making a good start to the holiday, going down at Hartlepoons by the narrowest margin. The Town were rather unlucky not to get a point.

A holiday crowd of 8,442 saw the game.

The ball was lively on a firm pitch in a blustery wind.

Winning the toss, the Town had the advantage of the wind, and settled into a four-three-three formation, with French, Read and King.

It was quite plain that the Town had to do everything they could this half to build up a lead.

Not for 10 minutes was there any semblance of a threat to the Town goal, and then a well-placed corner by Wright was scrambled away somewhat hurriedly.

Town's best chance so far was created by Dougan with a quick through-pass to King. The inside-left looked a possible scorer until Parry raced across to tackle him and conceded another corner.

The usually deadly Phythian missed a good chance of putting Hartlepoons ahead after a breakaway down the left. He lunged at the ball in front of goal and failed completely to make contact.

HARTLEPOOLS TACKLING STRONGLY

There had been no sign yet of the Town securing the domination they needed, and the Hartlepoons defence, strong in the tackle, was leaving no gaps.

In fact, probably the two best chances so far had fallen to Hartlepoons. McGovern missed the second by shooting much too hurriedly and wide.

A chance fell to Town, when Whittaker ran on to the ball as King finished a strong run. He lobbed it into the middle, but Allen spoilt it in his anxiety to push the ball back and set it up for Dougan.

There was a quick Hartlepoons breakaway and a scuffle at the Town end with Thomson trying to clear a ball that Swan had covered. The goalkeeper was bowled over by Phythian, and there

TEAMS

HARTLEPOOLS UTD.:

Green; Grant, Drysdale; McLeod, Aston, Parry; McGovern, Broadbent, Phythian, Mulvaney, Wright. Substitute: Bell.

LUTON TOWN: Swan;

Thomson, Jardine; Dougan, Rivers, Moore; French, Allen, Read, King, Whittaker. Substitute: Conboy.

Referee: D. N. H. Payne, Sheffield.

was quite a scramble before the threat was cleared.

With 10 minutes to go to the interval, Hartlepoons were threatening to take a grip, and their luck was out when Mulvaney headed the ball against the outside of the post from a centre by McGovern.

The Town were using the offside trap and with their own attack not making much progress it was pretty much stalemate.

The best chance of all fell to Mulvaney. With the Town defence squared up for offside a through pass struck Dougan and upset their calculations.

Mulvaney looked a scorer but took too long to control the ball and Moore raced up in a do-or-die effort. The shot struck him and went over. Half-time:

HARTLEPOOLS ... 0

LUTON TOWN ... 0

For the first five minutes the Town gave rather better than they received, even against the wind, and Read and King both saw shots swirl over the bar.

Just when things appeared to be going well for the Town, Hartlepoons were awarded a penalty after 55 minutes when McGovern was brought down as Jardine and Moore converged on him.

Town appealed vehemently against the award, but to no avail.

PHYTHIAN took the kick with almost clinical efficiency, planting the ball low into a corner of the net.

Hartlepoons were now playing with more confidence and using the down-the-middle

pass to advantage. Swan had to run outside his penalty area to kick away from Mulvaney.

A chance cropped up for Mulvaney from an apparently offside position, but his shot was deflected past a post.

There was a stormy scene at the Town end when Thomson went down in a heap claiming that he had been elbowed in the stomach by Wright, but after consulting the linesman, the referee gave Hartlepoons the free-kick, from which Wright landed almost on Thomson's back, and this time the verdict went in favour of the Town player.

Town got an equaliser after 70 minutes, literally as a bolt from the blue.

FRENCH let fly from fully 25 yards and the ball flashed into the top far corner of the net.

With 74 minutes gone Wright limped off with a leg injury and Bell came on as substitute.

It was less than the Town deserved when Hartlepoons regained the lead after 81 minutes through MULVANEY who lunged successfully at a centre by McGovern.

In the last minute a shot by King struck the underpart of the bar and came back into play. That was a cruel blow indeed.