

SUBSTITUTE RIVERS PUT BACK IN THE GAME

Dull fare served to below-average crowd

By CHILTERN

IT WAS DULL FARE that was served up this afternoon in the Town's match against Port Vale at Kenilworth Road. Luton showed little method or flair in attack, and the visitors generally made more use of their chances.

Port Vale snatched the advantage in the first half, but the Town eventually equalised when Rivers, who had come on as substitute for Pleat after the interval, netted from Jardine's cross.

There was no relief for the Town from their injury troubles. Graham French, who was troubled by a shoulder injury all through the Easter weekend, was ruled out shortly before the start. Fortunately young Brian Johnson, who has been out for some weeks through knee ligament trouble, was passed fit and so was a ready-made deputy for the outside-right position.

Other than that the Town made changes from the side that gave such a disappointing display here on Monday. Out went Alan Rivers to make room for a return to centre-half by Max Dougan. Frank Conboy, who was right-back in the last match, moved to right-half.

LEAGUE DEBUT FOR ADAMSON

Bobby Thomson's absence paved the way for a first-ever appearance in a League match by 18-year-old Terry Adamson, who was in Sunderland's youth team, along with Johnson, last season.

On the other hand, Port Vale, happy after a 5-0 victory over Rochdale, were unchanged.

Three of "Cesar's Maidens" were in attendance and presented the match ball to the referee in the middle of the pitch. They were also due to make the draw on behalf of the Pools Club at half-time.

For a change, there was no wind of gale force, but conditions were scarcely conducive to accurate football on this hard, bare pitch.

Despite the perfect spring weather, the gate was below the recent average, which was perhaps not surprising in view of last Monday's display.

FULL-BLOODED DRIVE

Early play was mostly of a scrappy, scrambling nature, and the first decisive move came from Port Vale and ended with Cullerton making a full-blooded drive that struck Dougan on the shoulder and went to safety.

Although quite persistent, the Town's raids were not getting very far. Yet there might have been trouble for the Vale from a centre by Whittaker to which Allen ran on strongly before colliding with Allcock. Johnson, to whom the ball ran, could not get in his shot quickly enough.

A corner to the Vale proved unproductive, and then there

TEAMS

LUTON TOWN: Swan; Adamson, Jardine; Conboy, Dougan, Moore; Johnson, Allen, Pleat, King, Whittaker. Substitute: Rivers.

PORT VALE: Sharratt; Logan, Ritchie; Poole, Allcock, Miles; Hill, Goodfellow, Georgeson, Cullerton, Wilson. Substitute: James.

Referee: Mr. R. F. Pritchard, of Salisbury.

was a freekick on the other flank when Jardine made a late tackle on Hill. This was nudged away with his head by Dougan, and the Vale were certainly not in such defensive frame of mind as their away record might have suggested.

So far, it had been pretty dull fare with nothing much to lift play above the level of mediocrity.

Nearest approach to a goal came after 19 minutes when Allen, back in his striking role, picked up a loose ball and from the edge of the penalty area made a drive that was so narrowly wide of the post that some people thought it had nestled in the back of the net.

A similar effort by Whittaker met with the same fate.

The Town were beginning to settle down now, with Allen leading their attacks with some threat. He was again unlucky with a drive that rose inches too high.

PORT VALE TAKE THE LEAD

In the 33rd minute WILSON put Port Vale ahead with a rising drive that eluded the groping Swan after he received a pass from Goodfellow. There was evidence of slack marking in defence here and Wilson certainly should not have been allowed a clear shot at goal.

There was a quick response from the Town with Whittaker getting across a fierce centre — so fierce, in fact, that Pleat, meeting it with his head, could not direct the ball at all.

Keeping up the pressure, the Town had the Vale defence in some trouble, but they were packing their penalty area well. A cross from Jardine made from near the deadline was easily dealt with.

The Vale were making

more use of their chances, and Cullerton, who was a constant source of danger, got in a shot from an angle which Swan had to move quickly to cover. Immediately after this Adamson damaged his right ankle, which brought quite a lengthy stoppage.

DISAPPOINTING HALF FOR TOWN

Adamson made a quick recovery and although the Town, with Jardine bolstering up their left flank, were still having more than a fair share of the play, they were not achieving much cohesion.

From the Town point of view this had been a thoroughly disappointing first half. They had shown little method and even less flair in attack — with the notable exception of Allen, who was unlucky not to get his name in the scoring list.

Most of the Town's raids were foundering against the strong young Port Vale centre-half, Allcock. Half-time:

LUTON TOWN ... 0
PORT VALE 1

For the start of the second half the Town brought on Rivers as substitute for Pleat, who had had a recurrence of the back trouble that kept him out before Easter.

There was a reshuffle of the forward line which took King to outside-left, his original position. Whittaker moved inside to become the link man and Rivers was up with Allen as the striker.

The new formation nearly brought a quick success when King swung in a centre that Allen headed back in the hope that one of his forward colleagues would be in position but the ball went straight to a defender.

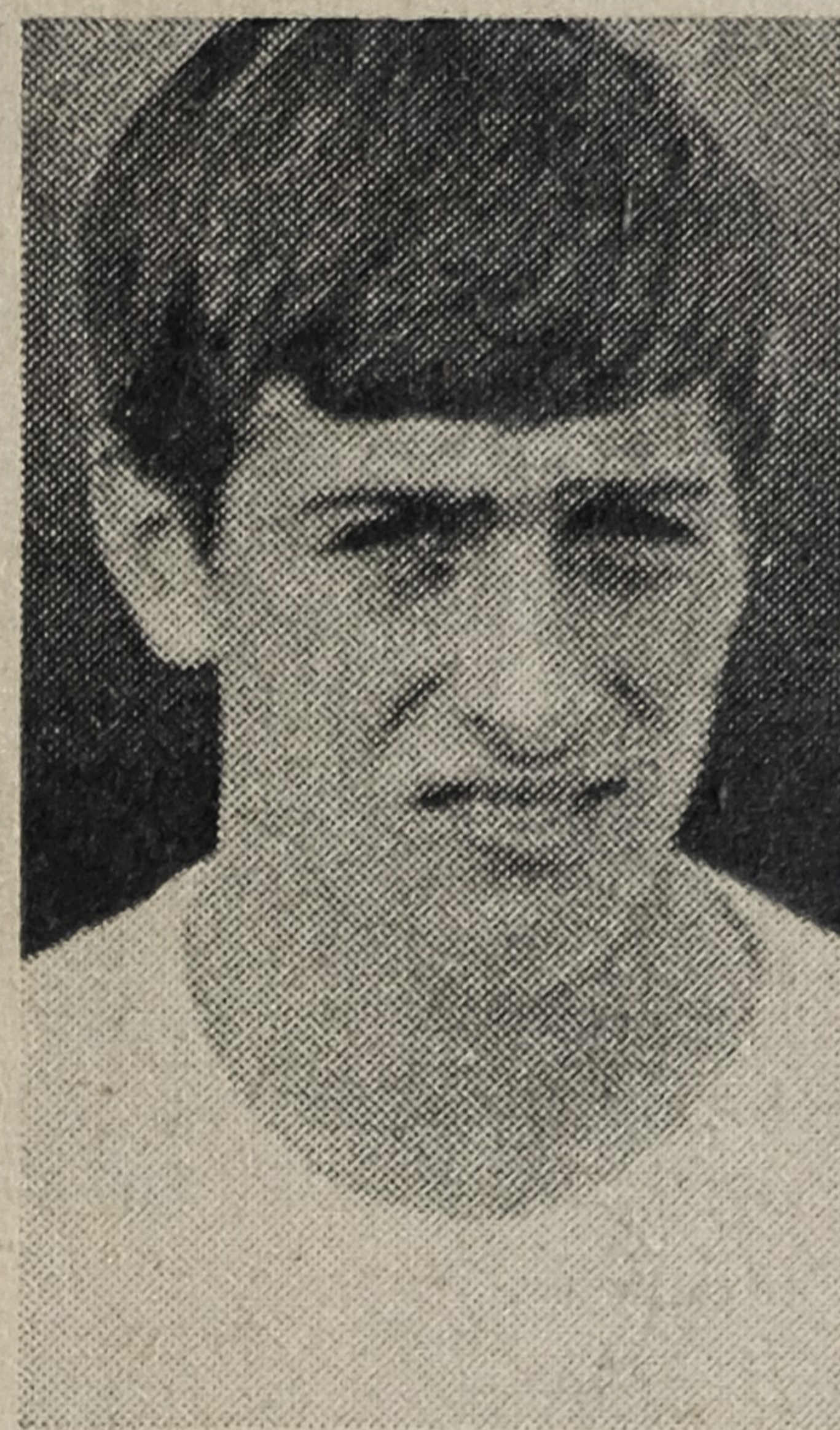
DOUGAN SHOT TESTS SHARRATT

However, it looked as if the Town had been given a pep talk at half-time because they threw off the lethargy and inhibitions that seemed to have afflicted them in the first half.

Dougan came through in purposeful style and presented Sharratt with almost his first serious task. The shot that tested the agility of the goal-keeper, who threw himself full length to make a somewhat sketchy save.

On the other side of the picture, however, there was some dilatory work in defence by Moore and Dougan that could have led to trouble, but in the end Dougan made a good recovery and robbed Georgeson.

It was still the Town having



Brian Johnson returned to the Town team at outside-right when Graham French failed a fitness test.

on hand to belt the ball into the roof of the net from two or three yards out, to put the Town on terms.

ALLEN UNLUCKY AGAIN

This gave the Town a little more heart and Allen, for whom this had been by no means the luckiest of matches, was unfortunate again with a drive following a free kick that rose only inches too high with Sharratt nowhere near the line of flight.

A foul on the luckless Allen way out on the right wing brought a lofted free kick by Conboy but again the tall Vale



Alan Rivers scored the equaliser for the Town.

defence was in position and they were certainly giving little away at close quarters.

Play continued on its pedestrian way with the Town still having more of the play but also still promising a good deal more than they achieved.

King, from 30 yards, made a pass back which Georgeson should have intercepted, but the centre-forward messed it up and finally the ball was scrambled away.

UNIMAGINATIVE FORWARDS

After this the Vale became more adventurous, and Swan

How the goals came

WILSON for Port Vale after 33 minutes.

RIVERS for Luton after 69 minutes. *MOORE*

went down rather ponderously to keep out a cross from Cullerton.

There was not much sign of an end to the stalemate because neither set of forwards was really showing sufficient imagination to break down the respective defences.

Hopes were raised when Jardine, who had been as effective an attacker as the Town had had, came through bravely from a pass by Moore, only to provide an anti-climax by getting his toe under the ball and lifting it much too high. Result:

LUTON TOWN ... 1
PORT VALE 1