

DETERMINED TOWN HIT SOUTHEND'S PROMOTION HOPES

**Winner came
only 10 minutes
from the finish**

By CHILTERN

LUTON TOWN 1, SOUTHEND UNITED 0

A GOAL by Keith Allen 10 minutes from the end of a hard-fought match at Kenilworth Road on Wednesday brought the Town the relief of two invaluable points in their fight to remove the danger of having to apply for re-election.

In truth, the decider should not have been so long delayed because the Town, showing considerable determination, had their chances, especially in the first half.

Making the sort of flying start which characterised so many home matches earlier in the season, they swept Southend, who rarely looked the part of promotion candidates, back on to the defensive, and really harassed them.

Several close range opportunities went astray mainly through lack of decision in front of goal, and there were times when the visitors, reinforced in defence by playing outside-right, Smillie, as a second centre-half, were really at panic stations.

Meanwhile, the Town had not a great deal about which to worry at the other end, except when McKinven, Southend's most dangerous forward, forced the best out of Read who made a great diving save from him.

WERE MORE POSITIVE

On the other hand, French, Allen and Rioch all went near to giving the Town the vital first goal which just would not come despite the fact that the Town gave a much more positive display than some we have seen recently.

From a time at the start of the first half, it looked as though Southend might live up to their reputation, but apart from shots by Smith and McKinven which Read saved with some difficulty, there was not a great deal of danger.

Gradually, the Town became on top again, but the game seemed destined for a goalless draw when ALLEN made his successful low shot from something of an angle.

ROBERTS MADE FIRST MISTAKE

Roberts, who had been faultless previously, had the ball covered but, perhaps because of its greasiness, it spun away and behind him and was over the line before Bentley could do his rescue act.

Having pushed their heads in front, the Town were in no mood to yield their advantage,

so that Southend's attempts to retrieve the situation, were comfortably contained.

Only black spot of the closing stages was the "booking" of French for an unnecessary offence, though, it must be admitted, that he had had quite a lot of provocation.

WHITTAKER RELISHES MOVE

French was always a source of danger, and there was a great deal of hard, successful work by Allen and Whittaker, with the latter giving every appearance of relishing his move inside.

Unfortunately, an early knock on the leg that has been so troublesome to him handicapped Rioch, who, even so, made two or three worthy efforts, and King spoilt much of his work by his bad habit of hanging on to the ball, and by the fact that he so often stopped when he should have been making for goal at top speed.

DOUGAN WAS OUTSTANDING

Without doubt, the Town's outstanding player was Dougan, who dealt easily with

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Ingle and whose heading of the ball was a good deal more decisive than it has been on some occasions.

Dougan was a dominant figure in a defence in which Conboy showed measureable improvement and Moore covered well.

Although McKinven worried Thomson at times, both he and Jardine were staunch tacklers, and Read thoroughly justified his recall to the team after not having been in goal for three months.

LUTON TN: Read; Thomson, Jardine; Conboy, Dougan, Moore; French, Allen, Rioch, Whittaker, King. Substitute: Johnson.

SOUTHEND UTD: Roberts; Bentley, Matthews; Slack, May, Beanland; Smillie, Woodley, Ingle, Smith, McKinven. Substitute: Flatt.

Referee: R A Paine, Hounslow. Attendance: 4,666.