

# BRILLIANT RIOCH END THE STALEMATE

## Poor finishing marred Town's earlier efforts

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By CHILTERN

THE FIRST HALF of Luton's match against Hartlepoons at Kenilworth Road this afternoon bore the unmistakable hallmark of a draw. Hartlepoons were packing their defence in a grim bid to keep their unbeaten record.

Then, early in the second half, Bruce Rioch brought this dull game to life. He made up for the poor finishing shown by the forwards earlier and scored with a clever solo effort.

Despite some anxiety in mid-week about the injury position, the Town were able to turn out a team more representative of their full strength—except of course that Rodney Green, with suspected cartilage trouble, and Max Dougan, still not quite 100 per cent fit after his ankle trouble, were missing.

Dougan told me before the match that he felt his ankle in the last 10 minutes of the Reserves' game on Wednesday, but will be in full training on Monday and hopes to be full match-fit in a short time.

What it all added up to was that Read, French and Whittaker, who missed the match at Southend on Monday, came back.

Hartlepoons, unbeaten so far in the League this season, were also able to field their announced team.

On a fine sunny afternoon the crowd at the start was rather disappointing and 7,000 was probably a high estimate.

First incident of note was a long dribble by Brown which ended with the ball going out of play and with Hepplewhite crashing into a girder alongside the goal, though without serious consequences.

### FREE KICK FOR HANDS

Most of the early football was too hurried to be accurate, but the Town began to settle down, and gained a free kick for hands a yard outside the penalty area after Whittaker had sent away Allen.

From it Rioch seemed to be pulled from behind, but still managed to get in a shot which Smith saved at full length.

French weaved his way inside, but his final shot, made as he was bowled over, flew straight at Smith, who was able to save comfortably.

Nearest attempt to a goal came when Mulvaney's shot flew a yard wide.

Hartlepoons were packing their penalty area, and in their quick breaks were finding more gaps than were the Town. But their finishing was unimpressive.

Read dealt capably with a free kick from Hepplewhite after Hare had brought down Somers.

Hartlepoons were being helped by the fact that far too much of the Town's passing was inaccurate.

### HEADED TO SAFETY

A thrill came when Whittaker suddenly crossed the ball, Allen threw himself at it, missed it, and Drysdale headed behind for safety.

An opportunity for the Town came when French found Whittaker in an open space and Brown dived for the centre, only to head it in completely the wrong direction.

Allen failed to make decisive use of an opportunity made by Moore, and in the end, Gill gave away a corner from which Moore produced an awkward sort of shot that bounced before it reached Smith, who managed to cope.

There was a hold-up while Sheridan received attention for an ankle injury, and he resumed with a heavy wad of plaster on the outside of his right boot.

### HARTLEPOONS ON ATTACK

Suddenly Hartlepoons developed a more attacking trend and Somers headed

## Teams

**LUTON TOWN.** — Read; Hare, Jardine; McDermott, Branston, Moore; French, Brown, Allen, Rioch, Whittaker. Substitute: Slough.

**HARTLEPOONS UNITED.** — Smith; Goad, Drysdale; Sheridan, Gill, Hepplewhite; McGovern, Broadbent, Phythian, Mulvaney, Somers. Substitute: Parry.

Referee: K. Burns, Dudley.

straight at Read from a well made centre by McGovern.

After that persistent work by Allen sent away French whose centre was easily cleared by Gill.

When Hartlepoons came back again Jardine had to concede a corner which was placed short by Broadbent to McGovern, but the doughty Moore came to the rescue again.

So far the finishing of both teams had been much below par, and Brown should have done better than to drive the ball against Gill after Whittaker had flashed it across.

Just about every time the Town attacked, Hartlepoons had funnelled eight men back in defence, and they were finding clear-cut openings difficult to achieve.

### FINISHING POOR

There was no doubt now that the Town were on top, but their finishing did not improve, and Rioch drove the ball straight at Smith from a pass by Brown as Hepplewhite crashed into him.

There followed a corner, which French placed left-footed. Everybody missed, and the ball ran on to Whittaker, who closed in but blasted the ball into the crowd.

When Hartlepoons hit back it took strong tackles, first by Branston and then McDermott, to keep out Phythian and Mulvaney.

There was a dangerous moment when Hepplewhite produced an unexpected shot that Read caught only at the second attempt, although there was no imminent danger because no-one was following up. Half-time.

**LUTON TOWN ... 0**

**HARTLEPOOLS ... 0**

From the start of the second half the Town went on to the attack and Smith had a more serious task than most that had come his way in pulling down a shot by Rioch after he had pushed out a centre by Whittaker.

With the Town eagerly seeking the vital first goal, Rioch went down in a heap in a tackle by Goad, and then Brown, streaming through, saw his shot rebound off Gill's leg.

Hartlepoons were now mainly on the defensive, and seemed set in their own minds that they could gain a point from this encounter.

With the Town pressure mounting, there was a somewhat scrambled clearance when Brown forced a way through, and then Branston came right away deep into the visitors' half before sending the ball too high.

Then came the end of the stalemate in the 56th minute with a brilliant goal by RIOCH. He picked up midway in the Hartlepoons half a header by McDermott, got into full stride, beat a defender, then drew Smith from



**BRUCE RIOCH kept up his scoring record with a brilliant opportunist effort after 56 minutes.**

his goal before planting the ball firmly into the back of the net for as good an opportunist effort as we are likely to see this season.

It certainly needed something like this to spark this game into action, because much of what had gone before was frankly dull.

### THE 3,000TH GOAL

This goal, I am assured, though I have no means of checking, was the Town's 3,000th in the Football League, which, of course, covers a lot of seasons.

After this the Town really began to get into their stride, with Jardine joining in the attack and forcing Smith to come out and go full-length to cut off his centre.

The Town were still looking the more dangerous and French gained a corner which Allen flicked with his head to Brown, who could not penetrate the packed defence. Hartlepoons came away through Phythian, of whom we had seen little, and his shot cannoned off Branston for a corner.

### RIOCH UNLUCKY FROM CORNER

For some reason or other, Whittaker and French swapped wings for a brief interval, during which French caught Smith in two minds, only to drive the ball into the side netting.

Whittaker resumed his own position to take a corner. This was met by Rioch, who was well on the mark, and unlucky to find Drysdale in the direct line of flight.

Jardine kept coming through with darting runs, one of which brought a corner, which was headed somewhat hazily by Allen.

Straight from this Hartlepoons had a chance when Moore failed to beat Mulvaney to the ball. The inside-left shot, and Read stuck out a leg to save, somewhat fortunately.

In the next minute Mulvaney had another chance, this time with the ball in the air, and he headed too high, much to the obvious consternation of his team-mates.

Rioch made a brave effort to repeat his previous success

and even had Smith out near the touchline before crossing the ball which was cleared most opportunely by Drysdale. Allen brought Smith into action with a powerful drive.

Again the Town had penalty claims turned down when French was pushed off the ball by Gill.

There could very well have been a second goal for the Town when French, still veering to the left wing, made a good cross which Allen headed in with his usual deadliness. But this time Gill was in the way and the ball was deflected for an unproductive corner.

For a time it looked as if the Town were tending to fall back on defence, which gave Hartlepoons a bigger share of the play, but they came back into it again, and Hepplewhite was spoken to by the referee for a bad foul on Allen as the centre-forward was streaking through.

Another free-kick came when Goad fouled Whittaker and from it Rioch shot wide.

Then Read was given some violent exercise when Hare made a very wide back pass

## How the goals came

**RIOCH for Luton after 56 minutes.**

which the goalkeeper just prevented from going for a corner.

Then came a heavy assault on the Hartlepoons goal, led by Brown, who passed to French, still lurking on the left, and his attempted cross was deflected for a corner.

In the last minute, Hartlepoons were awarded a free-kick against Rioch and after Allen, deep in defence, had headed away, Gill, right up in attack, shot over. Result:

**LUTON TOWN ... 1**  
**HARTLEPOOLS ... 0**