

NOT A VERY HAPPY NIGHT

Town fade-out in the gale

DONCASTER 2
LUTON TOWN 0

By
Roger
Duckworth

LUTON TOWN were unlucky at Doncaster last night. They had the best of the first half in which gale-force winds blew torrential rain into their faces and then faded, along with the rain, in the second.

Doncaster scored both their goals in the last twenty minutes, one of which went into the net off the leg of full-back Fred Jardine during a hectic goalmouth scramble.

Luton were without winger Graham French, who dropped out at the last minute because of an ingrowing toenail, and they lost full-back Tommy Hare in the 37th minute with a gashed shin that needed two stitches.

After a goalless first half Luton seemed certain of at least a point against a mediocre-looking Rovers side.

Slackened

But they slackened off after the interval — as they did at Rochdale on Saturday — and the home side gained enough confidence to take the points.

Skipper Terry Branston was declared fit after a foot injury on Saturday, and Billy McDerment played on the right-wing for French.

McDerment was outstanding. He clicked into the wing position easily, and was always ready to drop back into defence where he did some sterling work.

Early on Whittaker missed a chance after a good move between McDerment and Dougan. Buxton headed on Dougan's centre but Whittaker's shot was blocked.

New signing Buxton looked good in the first half. Even on the slippery pitch he was able to turn on the proverbial sixpence and change the direction of play.

In the 16th minute he hit the cross-bar with a first-time shot from a McDerment free kick and Doncaster were lucky to get the ball away. Luton can claim that their bad luck continued when two penalty appeals were turned down by international referee Jim Finney. The first came in the first half when Buxton was tripped — and the other after half-time when Slough was upended in the area.

Doncaster also had their

moments before the break and Jardine, who had a fine game, was often on hand to avert danger. On one occasion he booted a Watson shot off the goal line following a left-wing corner.

Doncaster's former Under-23 international, Alick Jeffrey, was not often in the picture, but looked good when given room in which to move.

After Hare was carried off by trainer Dennis Evans Whittaker shot wide but made up for his lapse just after the break when he ran in fast to take the ball off the toe of Warboys as he took aim from close in.

Interventions

Dougan made a couple of errors but also made some timely interventions. He was also always ready to shoot — an attribute that some of the forwards lacked.

Luton took first half honours but its goals that count. And Luton failed to get any.

Both sides swopped about so much that it was hard to define any plan of campaign. Doncaster's wingers changed over and Luton's backs followed them. McDerment and Dougan were seen both in defence and attack while Whittaker and Allen moved about in search of work.

Doncaster went ahead in the 70th minute. Branston gave away a free kick and after Dougan cleared off the line Gilfillan netted, the ball going in off Jardine's leg.

Alan Slough, who came on for Hare, looked good, and in the 82nd minute he put Buxton away, but the Doncaster goalkeeper just won a 50-50 chance in a race with the ball.

Four minutes from time Watson clinched the game for Rovers. After a mistake on the half way line by Dougan, Gilfillan raced between Branston and Jardine. As he neared goal he made as if to shoot. As Read narrowed the angle Gilfillan unselfishly passed to Watson, whose shot was half blocked by Read before crossing the line.

Luton were not allowed to play in either their red or white strips because of clashing with the Doncaster colours, so they borrowed Watford's gold strip. They showed that all that is gold does not always glisten.

Doncaster Rovers: Morrill; Kelly, Shaw; Ricketts, Robertson, Leigh; Watson, Kettleborough, Warboys, Jeffrey, Gilfillan. Sub: Flowers.

Luton Town: Read; Hare, Jardine; Dougan, Branston, Moore; McDerment, Buxton, Allen, Rioch, Whittaker. Sub: Slough.

Attendance: 5,529.