

TOWN FIND THEIR GOAL AND WIN EASILY

Rochdale yield four times in first half

10-2-68

By CHILTERN

FIVE goals in the first half, four of them to Luton, put the Kenilworth Road fans in a happy mood this afternoon, when Rochdale were the visitors.

The Town survived a first-minute scare, and then turned on some of their vintage football to emphasise the difference between the two sides. At half-time the issue looked already settled with the Town well on the way to their first win since Boxing Day.

Within the last half an hour before the kick-off, manager Allan Brown finally resolved his forward line-up when he had assured himself that Ian Buxton, who missed last week's match at York because of a throat infection, had fully recovered. Accordingly, he recalled him to inside-right, Keith Allen moving to centre-forward. Thus, Rodney Green has to wait a little longer for his re-appearance before the home crowd.

However, he was named as substitute, so there was a possibility of his being brought in at some stage.

Rochdale made no late alteration, and were captained by the former Luton Town skipper, John Reid, who was at left-back, a position which he never sampled here. His



Bruce Rioch hammered the Town into the lead with a great goal in the 14th minute.

immediate opponent this afternoon was Graham French, who has been in the shadows for the last couple of months.

PITCH ON THE HEAVY SIDE

Although the weather was dry, the pitch was distinctly on the heavy side, and there had been liberal use of sand, mainly down the middle, and on the main stand side.

There was a fair-sized crowd, though rather below the recent average, when the game started with the Town defending the Kenilworth Road end.

In the first minute, Rochdale missed a great chance to take a sensational lead. Fletcher, racing past Dougan, hooked the ball past Branston, and Hutchinson was left with only Read to beat. Despairingly, the goalkeeper went down in a heap and was fortunate to find the winger's shot striking him on the legs and rebounding to safety.

MOORE TRIES A LONG SHOT

When the Town made some ground, Moore made a long shot which Leslie Green saved, not without difficulty, and then Buxton headed wide, following clever work by Moore, Whittaker and Allen.

A foul by Dougan on Hutchinson enabled John Reid, to plant a high free kick into the goalmouth, but Read, showing excellent anticipation, came out nearly 15 yards to cut the ball off.

Rochdale continued to be dangerous in their quick thrusts, and Hutchinson, with a low cross shot, was too close to the far post for comfort, with Read beaten.

After a period of indeterminate play, the Town came

through swiftly and dangerously when Allen sent Whittaker racing down the wing. The left-winger let go a low centre which should have been the means of the Town going ahead, but first Allen and then Slough between them and then Buxton, with an empty net yawning in front of him, missed making contact.

The Town improved, and Rochdale's Green was given an opportunity to show his agility by throwing himself forward to catch a shot by Buxton.

A foul on Slough brought the Town a free-kick that enabled them to keep up the pressure but again there was a lack of decision in front of goal, and the ball was scrambled away.

RIOCH HAMMERS ONE HOME

There certainly had been signs of something approaching the vintage Luton, if only they could get the goals, and sure enough one came in the 14th minute through RIOCH, who like most members of the attack, apart from Allen, has not been much on the mark lately.

The whole thing built up in midfield, starting with strong work by Branston, who was beaten in the tackle finally. Rioch stepped in to gain possession, and slipped the ball to Allen before racing down the middle for the return pass, which duly came. From just inside the penalty area, Rioch hammered it low into the corner of the net.

It was a great goal. A minute later, Buxton made a determined effort to squeeze the ball in from an angle, but it was too acute, and then he was unlucky with a header only inches wide of



A minute after Rochdale had equalised Rioch's goal, Keith Allen crashed in a great shot to put Town ahead again.

the far post with Green well beaten.

Rochdale fought back to gain two quick corners, but neither caused the Town defence undue concern.

However, concern there certainly was in the 23rd minute when Rochdale gained equality through FLETCHER. Frankly, from the Town point of view, it was an unsatisfactory goal, because Harley, who had switched inside, was allowed to make a long dribble without being firmly challenged, and in the end he pushed the ball on to Fletcher, who beat Read comfortably as Branston threw himself in despairingly. This came as a bit of a



Ian Buxton improved the Town's lead by heading a goal after 38 minutes.

shock to the Town, but they were back in the lead in the next minute through ALLEN. His goal came immediately after a stoppage for attention to Russell. As soon as the game was on again the ball, bobbing about the Rochdale penalty area, was pushed to Allen, who turned quickly and crashed it just under the bar, leaving Green helpless.

TOWN LOOKING GOAL-HUNGRY

Certainly there was a more goal-hungry look about the Town forwards than has been the case in recent weeks. The Rochdale goal escaped next from Allen and then from Whittaker. The latter's low drive looked earmarked for the net until Cockcroft stopped it on the line.

The Town pressure continued and Allen, out on the left wing, swung over a likely centre, but Buxton and French appeared to hamper each other.

Particularly on the stand side, the pitch was very treacherous, and was cutting up badly.

Luton continued on top, and although Rochdale gained another corner they were soon pushed back. Allen, in lively form, sent away French, and the winger beat an opponent before making a centre that Buxton could not quite reach.

THE PRESSURE CONTINUES

Then French gained a corner which he did not place all that well, though Slough gained possession and made a shot that was blocked.

With the Town's pressure continuing, French placed a corner much more accurately with his left foot, and it needed a quick reaction by Green to punch the ball away from Allen's head.

Rochdale were quite often causing concern when they got on the move, but their finishing was not markedly efficient.

Certainly, the Town were the more persistent, and it was probably as well for Rochdale that Jenkins got in the way of a power drive from Rioch after French had made the opening.

THIRD GOAL PUTS TOWN WELL ON TOP

Towards half-time Rochdale were being pressed firmly back on to the defensive, and the Town increased their lead through BUXTON after 38 minutes. The goal came from a corner forced by Rioch. Whittaker placed the ball well. Branston went up for it, reached it with his head, and there was Buxton between him and the goal, ready to head it on. It went into the net, despite a frantic effort by Green to clear.

The goalkeeper touched the ball but could not stay its progress. This ended a long, lean run so far as goals were concerned for the inside-right, and

TEAMS

LUTON TOWN: Read; Dougan, Jardine; Slough, Branston, Moore; French, Buxton, Allen, Rioch, Whittaker. Substitute: Green.

ROCHDALE: Green L; Cockcroft, Reid; Taylor, Jenkins, Smith; Harley, Russell, Fletcher, Melle-dew, Hutchinson. Substitute: Calloway.

Referee, Mr. D. R. Nippard of Bournemouth.

obviously must have put him on better terms with himself. Before the game was re-started there was attention for a player on each side, Rioch and Harley, but both were able to resume speedily.

BRANSTON GETS A GOAL, TOO

Goals continued to come, and there was another for the Town four minutes from half-time when BRANSTON, again up for the corner, this time one taken by French, was on hand to score with an over-



Four minutes before half-time Terry Branston went up for a corner kick taken by French and executed an overhead kick that landed in the net for the Town's fourth goal.

head kick that took Green completely by surprise. Half-time.

LUTON TOWN ... 4 ROCHDALE 1

Both teams introduced substitutes in the second half. Obviously, manager Allan Brown felt that 45 minutes was enough for Buxton after his illness, and Green came on in his place.

Rochdale pulled off Melle-dew, brought on Calloway, and re-jigged their defence.

Calloway went to left-back, obviously in the hope that he would be more successful against French, and Reid took over as a midfield link.

There were a couple of early raids by Rochdale, in one of which Read had some difficulty in coping with a header from Fletcher. Then Harley, against whom the Town appealed for an offside decision, was allowed to go on, and finally Fletcher, harassed by desperate defenders, shot much too high.

THE EXCITEMENT SUBSIDES

The game was taking some time to get back into gear, and Rochdale were having quite a share of the play.

Somewhat or other Branston, unchallenged, got himself into the situation in which he had to concede a corner, from which Fletcher made an overhead shot that Read was able to catch without having to move. Meanwhile, a shot from French went too high, and a centre from the winger went behind.

A better Town movement, begun by French, enabled Slough to fling across a centre which Allen missed with his head, and the ball went awkwardly for Rodney Green, who was behind him.

Then, in a quick Rochdale breakaway, Fletcher was left with a good chance in front of goal, but Slough stepped in smartly to dispossess him.

Rochdale were now finding difficulty in coping with the Town's offside trap, but they seemed to be unlucky to get a decision against them when

Harley broke through. The referee although allowing it, did not loooy altogether happy with the linesman's signal.

Back came the Town, with Rodney Green earning applause for a cleverly flicked pass to French, but the winger's centre was turned the wrong side of the post by Allen as he rushed in at top speed.

CLEARED OFF THE GOAL-LINE

There followed some hot Luton pressure, in which Rodney Green had a header cleared off the goal-line and Allen had a shot saved.

French was prominent again in sending away Allen. Smith stepped in with a firm tackle and hurt himself in the process. The upshot was a goal-kick, when it seemed pretty plain to most people that it should have been a corner.

Now the Town were regaining some of their first-half sparkle, and Leslie Green threw himself forward in spectacular fashion to keep out a free-kick by Whittaker. Then, he had trouble in dealing with an awkward shot by Rioch, who blazed the ball across the goal, too hard and high for anyone to do much about it.

GREEN HURT IN TACKLE

Rodney Green was shaken up in a tackle by Jenkins, but the free kick brought nothing. Play was now becoming rather scrambling. Increasingly, Jardine had been going up to help the attack, and Rodney Green made a fine, but ineffective effort to reach a strong cross by him. Then, after French had centred, Whittaker should have done better than shoot over from close in.

ROCHDALE HIT BACK AND READ SAVES

When Rochdale came back again, Read going full-length, just reached at the foot of the post a surprise shot by Calloway.

To some extent, the Town were allowing Rochdale back into the game, and they were pulled out of trouble by another fine save by Read, this time from Taylor.

French apparently came to the conclusion that something should be done about the situation, because he embarked on a fine run that took him through the defence, and he tested Leslie Green with a firm, low drive.

The referee had a word with French and Jenkins after some argumen about a throw-in.

Town mounted a but it began to look as if this half would be goal-less.

Rochdale had a free kick just outside the Town's

How the goals came

RIOCH for Luton after 14 minutes.
FLETCHER for Rochdale after 23 minutes.
ALLEN for Luton after 24 minutes.
BUXTON for Luton after 38 minutes.
BRANSTON for Luton after 41 minutes.

penalty area. The ball was rammed into the defensive wall, but was returned quickly, and Read again had to go full-length to save a header from Russell.

When the Town hit back, Allen was pulled down, and Slough sent the free kick wide.

Read was beaten by a header from Russell, but Dougan headed off the goal-line. Result:

LUTON TOWN ... 4
ROCHDALE 1