

Four-goal Luton stay at top

Luton Tn 4
Lincoln 2

By ROGER DUCKWORTH

LUTON were in top form at Kenilworth Road this afternoon with a 4-2 win over Lincoln.

There was something of a Cup-tie atmosphere before the match. Luton's supporters were entertained by a display of police-dog efficiency as part of Luton's cut-crime drive.

Luton were at full strength and retained the side that has won the last two matches so convincingly. Lincoln were also as programmed.

It was the first time in this successful season that Town had attracted their fans to Kenilworth Road as table toppers, and 20 minutes before the kick-off there looked as if there was going to be a big gate.

Lincoln began when Peden lobbed a long ball into the Luton penalty area, but Terry Branston headed clear.

But a minute later Luton fans were roaring in anticipation when Keith Allen just missed a ball from the right in front of goal.

Splendid

This had been a splendid move which involved Rioch, Buxton and Slough, and Jardine chased across to stop the ball going into touch, gave it back to Allen, but after a scramble goalkeeper Kennedy had only a soft shot to save.

Dougan set them roaring again when he robbed the fast-moving Holmes and chased 50 yards.

The ball went out to the right where Buxton beat his man and centred. The ball was just too high for the jumping Allen, but WHITTAKER was running in and swept the ball passed Kennedy from close range.

A minute later Luton almost went further ahead when Jardine put Rioch through with a shrewd pass and the inside left's shot was not very far wide.

Town kept up the pressure and from a Whittaker corner Branston was penalised for riding on Harford's shoulders.

Moore put in some hard work on the half-way line, but a return pass from Rioch was short and Moore lost control.

French came into the picture in the eighth minute when he cut in from the right with a

dazzling run and accepted a return pass from Allen, and it was only hands by Pilgrim just outside the area that prevented him from going through.

Slough's free kick, quickly taken, shot into a group of photographers on the left hand side of the Oak Road end goal.

Luton went two up in the 10th minute with a superb goal from BRUCE RIOCH's right foot which swung from well outside the penalty area.

Branston thumped a long free kick into the area, Slough headed it on and it was only half cleared to RIOCH who smashed it back first time past Kennedy, who didn't even have time to move.

Fine attempt

A long first-time clearance by John Moore in the face of a rapidly building Lincoln attack was chased by Allen into the empty half of the field, and the advancing Kennedy only just got there first.

After 15 minutes Whittaker made another fine attempt at goal and his quick thinking almost put Town further ahead.

Buxton turned quickly to give the winger a return pass on the edge of the box following a Moore pass, and under heavy pressure and with the goalkeeper, advancing Whittaker tried a cheeky chip instead of the expected drive and his effort was only just over the crossbar.

In a rare attack that built up slowly from the left Holmes almost surprised Read with a snap shot that was turned round for a corner. From this Lincoln scored the easiest of goals when GRUMMETT was unmarked and he didn't have a lot of difficulty in heading into the net.

After Lincoln's goal had shocked Luton they burst back into attack and Buxton, presented with a good opportunity, shot just wide.

Well saved

Allen chased a long ball through the middle, controlled it well, ran clear, but with only Kennedy to beat shot wide.

French controlled a high clearance and after he had cut inside his shot was blocked and bounced clear to Buxton, whose angled shot was well saved by Kennedy.

Half-way through the first half Luton appeared to have lost some of their impetus, and Dougan was called on to make a fine tackle to rob Thom in a dangerous position on the left.

Lincoln were looking dangerous in breakaways and the Luton crowd was relieved to see the linesman's flag wave as Holmes found himself with the ball right in front of goal.

After Allen had been floored by Harford five yards from the



Luton outside left Whittaker jubilant after scoring the first goal against Lincoln

touchline on the left Rioch was inches high with a header.

In the 30th minute Luton were awarded a penalty for hands by Brown, who stopped Buxton's header entering the net. WHITTAKER scored in immaculate style.

The events leading up to the penalty produced some fine football. French beat Peden, slipped the ball to Slough, who in turn passed to the overlapping Dougan by the corner flag. The full back put across a grand centre and it was from this that Buxton had his attempt handled.

Jardine was hurt in a melee on the edge of the Lincoln penalty area and received lengthy treatment from Town's new trainer Doug Davidson.

Just before the interval Luton set their Oak Road end choir into full voice when Keith ALLEN collected a long ball from Slough over towards the right, pushed it forward tantalisingly close to Kennedy then followed it up and thumped it into the net for Luton's fourth.

HT: Luton 4 Lincoln 1

Straight from the kick off for the second half Buxton jiggled his way through, and after sending Harford the wrong way his hard shot was blocked in front of goal by an outstretched foot.

French won a corner which Kennedy completely missed and Brown, who had been unlucky to give away a penalty in a similar position in the first half, headed off the goal line.

Allen was following up and his hard shot rose just above the crossbar into the crowd.

Pilgrim started a promising move for Lincoln, but Holmes ruined it in the penalty area by giving a through ball which went straight out for a goal kick.

Lincoln's defence was panicked into giving away a corner, and from the kick French's effort was headed back for a second. This one was punched clear.

Over bar

French featured in another good move for Luton when his long cross was headed back by Allen, and Rioch shot just over the bar.

French continued to tease the defence with hanging centres and on one occasion Kennedy made a good diving save to cut out one of these from the head of Buxton.

In the 60th minute manager Allan Brown sent on Micky Brown to substitute for Alan Slough, who did not appear to be injured. Lincoln sent on Ford for Cobb.

A short pass from Whittaker back in defence sent Rioch away and after a 50-yard sprint he shot just wide.

Brown showed well within a couple of minutes of taking the field when he robbed Lincoln of possession and sent French away on the right.

The winger won a corner after his centre was punched over the bar, and in a terrific goalmouth scramble Kennedy lost possession twice, a shot from Allen was headed off the line and Luton were awarded two more corners in quick succession before Lincoln eased the pressure.

Brown also got himself into trouble a couple of times with well-meant clearances that went wrong, and with Lincoln sensing they could score again, the Luton goal came under some pressure.

Do-or-die

A long free kick into the goal mouth by Dougan caused Lincoln some problems, and harford was forced to make a do-or-die clearance which almost resulted in an own goal.

With the clock showing two minutes to go Read made a good low save to a smart effort by Pilgrim and seconds later Grummett just failed to get to a low centre.

Seconds before the end Holmes started a good move on the left and his pass inside was neatly collected by THOM who smashed a hard shot past the unsighted Read.

VERDICT

DESPITE giving away a needless goal in the last minute Luton showed championship form with a 4-2 victory over Lincoln which makes their goal tally in the last three matches 10 with only three against.

When they last played at home two weeks ago against Rochdale, Luton were leading 4-1 at half time. This afternoon against Lincoln they gave a repeat performance with cracking goals from Whittaker, Rioch, a penalty from Whittaker, and Keith Allen.

Luton played some sparkling football, and had Ian Buxton not had some bad luck they could well have doubled that half-time score.

As in the last two weeks Luton's attack was in terrific form. There was a great deal of work, in particular from Allen and Buxton, and in the first half I made Buxton the outstanding player even though he did not have the luck to score.

The defence also was well in control except for a few minor lapses half way through the first 45 minutes. Luckily these did not come to anything more than the one goal deficit that was marked against them at half time.

The second-half was not a patch on the first. There was never as many clear-cut chances and offside often stopped promising moves.

Perhaps Luton were pacing themselves for Monday's match against Darlington.

Buxton worked well throughout alongside big-hearted Keith Allen. On the right Graham French supplied a steady string of passes which often reduced the rank of Lincoln's defence to panic.

Ray Whittaker did well all round and took his two goals, one from the penalty spot, in grand style. Full backs Jardine and Dougan both showed well while the forwards were given plenty of possession from the link men.

Teams

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

LINCOLN	CITY:	Kennedy;
Brown,	Peden;	Corner,
Harford,	Pilgrim;	Gregson,
Cobb,	Grummett,	Holmes,
Thom.	Sub:	Ford.

GOALS

WHITTAKER (Luton) 4th min
RIOCH (Luton) 10th min
GRUMMETT (Lincoln) 17th min
WHITTAKER (Luton) pen, 30th min
ALLEN (Luton) 44th minute.
THOM (Lincoln) 89th min.

Referee: Mr J. R. Osborne (Ipswich).

Attendance: 11,159.