

VITAL ENCOUNTER

Chances slip on both sides as tension rises

By CHILTERN

LUTON TOWN put up a great performance in their vital promotion battle at Chesterfield this afternoon, and seemed determined to prove their worth as leaders.

They survived a fierce buffeting in the early stages and recovered to turn the tables. Goals were scarce, however, and it seemed likely as the game progressed into its later stages that one might be enough to settle the issue.

Freddie Jardine, who has an injured ankle, was finally ruled out of the reckoning this morning before the Town party left Blackpool, where they had been having special training since Tuesday.

Every effort was made to get him fit, and he had two treatment sessions at Blackpool's ground yesterday.

His place at left-back was taken by Billy McDerment, who took over from him in the closing stages of Monday's match with Darlington. McDerment is usually a wing-half, but his best performances since joining the Town from Leicester have been at full-back.

There had also been some doubt about Terry Branston, the Town's skipper, who, on Monday, had a recurrence of an ankle injury received at Brentford a fortnight ago. However, he proved fit enough to insist on playing, he, too, had been having twice daily treatment sessions at the Blackpool ground.

Out of the half-dozen reserves at his disposal, manager Allan Brown nominated winger John Ryan as the substitute.

This was a vital promotion match, as was indicated by the size of the crowd, and the Town probably had their biggest following, apart from the recent game at Brentford.

CHESTERFIELD PLAY NEW LEFT-BACK

After a bad spell at home, Chesterfield badly needed to win this one to keep in the promotion battle. To boost their hopes, they went into the transfer market yesterday for John Lumsden, the Workington left-back, who was pitched straight into the team with the somewhat onerous task of marking Graham French.

It was a dull, dry and cool afternoon. The pitch looked in reasonable condition, being soft enough on top to take a stud.

Intense early pressure came from Chesterfield, and after John Moore had rather dallied in making a challenge, Kettleborough swept the ball wide of the near post. For a moment or two the ball bobbed about the Town goalmouth, inducing a couple of panicky clearances, but in the end Phelan backing up the attack, sent the ball wide.

ON THE RAMPAGE AGAIN

Chesterfield certainly had settled down the more quickly and good work by Pugh set them on the rampage again so that John Moore made a spectacular clearance in mid air when he might conceivably have allowed the ball to go through to Read.

Chesterfield, despite their early supremacy, were tending to snatch at their scoring chances. Certainly there was no need for Tony Moore to shoot so hurriedly when he was left conveniently placed. As a result, the ball flew harmlessly over the goal. Even so, by his gestures, Read was not particularly happy at the lack of cover being afforded him.

When the Town made a move, Rioch tried a shot from almost 30 yards after McDerment had pushed the ball through, but there was little behind his efforts, and Roberts saved easily.

The referee had a word with McDerment after a foul on Tony Moore, which necessitated his having attention.

Read came out confidently to catch Holmes's free kick and then Rioch found French, the winger, drawing inside, found Lumsden too much, however, and was dispossessed.

Chesterfield swept to the attack again, and Tony Moore produced a rising drive that posed a lot of difficulty for Read in the angle of the woodwork.

At first, he seemed to have pushed the ball over but it came back off the bar.

A great through pass all along the ground by Whittaker nearly made an opening for Buxton, who was playing in the orthodox centre-forward position, but the ball went just too far for him, and Roberts was able to come out and intervene.

McDERMENT AGAIN IN TROUBLE

McDerment was again spoken to by the referee for bringing down Tony Moore. The free-kick was well placed, but the Chesterfield finishing continued to be below standard, because Kettleborough shot well over.

Free-kicks for fouls, mostly against the Town, continued to come, and pushing by Rioch counted as the sixth offence by them in the first quarter-of-an-hour.

Playing more confidently, with Slough backing them up, the Town made progress. The ball was switched out to Whittaker, but he was beaten by a firm tackle by Holmes.

Slough then produced the Town's best attempt so far with a shot from 25 yards that bounced awkwardly, but which finally caused Roberts little trouble.

In the next minute, Read went full-length at the edge of the six-yard line to keep out a shot by Hollett, with Wilson in close attendance.

TOWN LOOKING MORE LIKE LEADERS NOW

A chance fell to the Town when Dougan took the home defence by surprise by racing through to take a pass by French. His centre went right across the goal with no-one able to do anything about it until Holmes turned it for a corner for safety.

Now, the Town were beginning to look more like leaders. Dougan was again prominent in sending away French, who gained another corner. This he placed left-footed, and Roberts

just managed to snatch the ball off the head of Branston, who had gone right up into the goalmouth.

Back in his own goalmouth, Branston gave away a corner with an overhead kick, but Read was cutting out the crosses well, and he did so again with Wilson's effort from the corner flag.

A brilliant passing movement by Allen and Whittaker put the Town on to the attack again, and it looked extremely promising until Whittaker's attempt to find Buxton was intercepted by Neale.

A "GOAL" BUT IT'S OFFSIDE

Chesterfield did get the ball into the net through Kettleborough, but only after the whistle had gone for an off-side decision, much to the disappointment of the big crowd.

This was a pretty dour battle, with the Town having to a large extent thrown off the early Chesterfield superiority, and Rioch brought Roberts into action with a rising shot, but again from too long a range to worry the goalkeeper.

Dougan added to the count of fouls with one on Wilson, whom he chased right across to the opposite wing. The free-kick was cleared, and immediately the Town broke away through Rioch. He was chopped down a couple of yards outside the penalty area, and it might have been by any one of three defenders who converged on him.

With half an hour gone, the score sheet was still blank, which just about represented the true state of affairs, because there was very little in it.

In sharp attacks at each end, Allen was well wide with a first-time shot, and Hollett headed into the hands of Read.

A free kick to the Town, placed right into the goalmouth by Dougan, produced a rush at the Chesterfield end in which Roberts, Buxton and Neale all went for the ball together. All missed, and it ran for a goal-kick.

TOWN NOW TESTING CHESTERFIELD

Roberts then punched away rather sketchily a centre by Allen, with Buxton challenging.

Again Rioch had his feet whipped from under him, this time by Pugh, but on this occasion his shot from the free kick was beaten down. Collecting the loose ball, Slough drove wide.

There was trouble for Chesterfield when Whittaker made a centre that was too high for Buxton's head, but the ball was close to being

TEAMS

CHESTERFIELD: Roberts; Holmes, Lumsden; Pugh, Neale, Phelan; Moore (A), Randall, Hollett, Kettleborough, Wilson. Substitute: Hughes.

LUTON TOWN: Read; Dougan, McDerment; Slough, Branston, Moore (J.); French, Buxton, Allen, Rioch, Whittaker. Substitute: Ryan.

Referee, Mr. N. C. H. Burtenshaw, of Great Yarmouth.

forced in with Roberts stranded. A corner followed, to which Roberts, who was now far busier, hung on to in the face of the close attention of Branston.

When next Chesterfield made ground McDerment was penalised for another foul on Tony Moore, and this time his name was taken.

Chesterfield were not looking all that happy under pressure as the Town probed away continually for the vital first goal.

CHESTERFIELD HIT BACK

With a couple of minutes to go to half time, Chesterfield drew themselves together for an assault, but again it fizzled out.

Read, however, had to go down at the foot of the post to save from Wilson, but on balance he was less severely tested than Roberts.

Chesterfield persisted and gained a corner on the left. Read fisted away one-handed, and in the end Rioch cleared. Half-time:

CHESTERFIELD 0
LUTON 0

If points were awarded in football as in boxing, the Town would have got the verdict at the end of the first half, because once they had survived the early Chesterfield fire they looked the more capable team.

There was a tentative sort of start to the second half with neither team making notable progress, and defence continued to be tight in their covering.

Chesterfield had proved themselves fallible to the Town's offside trap, and this seemed to have affected to some extent the confidence of their attack.

CLOSE CALL FOR TOWN

When a corner by French was cleared, John Moore was penalised out near the touch-line for pushing, and the free kick was taken so quickly that a great gap appeared in the Town's defence through which the tall Hollett streamed. Read had seen the danger, however, and came out quickly to reach the ball fractionally before the centre-forward.

When the Town got going again, Roberts was in some trouble when harassed by Buxton, but again the covering was adequate.

Further Town pressure followed, in which Allen was prominent.

When Chesterfield replied, a power drive by Tony Moore was headed out by Branston, and then Read had to go full-length at the foot of the post to keep out a drive by Wilson.

Chesterfield, driven on by Kettleborough, who found a way through made a centre which Read could not clear completely, and Randall left, with a snap chance, headed to the wrong side of the near post.

SPARKLING RUN BY FRENCH

A sparkling run by French in which he sold a dummy to a couple of defenders, ended in anti-climax with the ball going for a goal-kick as Lumsden challenged him.

Trouble could have developed for the Town when Whittaker, well back in his own half, tried to pass to Read and found the ball intercepted by Tony Moore. Fortunately for the Town he could not control it.

Play had swung Chesterfield's way again, and they were showing greater determination as they fought for the first goal. Branston headed away for a corner, which Dougan cleared.

French put Town back on the attack by sending away Whittaker. The winger looked to see who was in position, decided that all were marked, and so went on his own to make a drive from an angle that Roberts somewhat hurriedly pushed for a corner. From this Branston sent the ball just wide.

The Town were back on top again, now, and when Moore was fouled about five yards outside the penalty area, Whittaker placed the free-kick beautifully. Allen had the cruellest of luck to see his header beat Roberts and smack the bar.

Chesterfield were now switching their forwards in a bid to obtain improvement, and Kettleborough was now on the right wing, still closely marked by Slough, while Tony Moore was out on the left, and Wilson in some indefinable position inside.

A foul on Buxton took the Town back to the Chesterfield end in strength, but the kick was cleared quickly, and then Hollett found Kettleborough out on the right, where a corner was won.

Wilson went to take it, and Read harassed by Hollett, missed the ball completely. Not that there was any anxiety, because Branston was there to clear. The ball went upfield again, and French with another run, this time down the middle, had the home defence on tenterhooks before he finally let go a shot which missed by a very narrow margin.

There was a stoppage while attention was given to Tony Moore, hurt in a tackle with Dougan, against whom a foul was given, but Branston was there to clear the free kick.

It was cut-and-thrust now, with plenty of tension, and still neither team really being able to claim that it had the upper hand.

A half-chance fell to Buxton from a through pass by Dougan, but Neale came across to concede a corner, French placed it well, but Roberts came right out of his goal to make a confident catch.

FORTUNES SWAY

As fortunes swayed, Buxton, from just inside the penalty area, forced Roberts to make a hurried save at the angle of the woodwork.

Tony Moore was pulled down rather unnecessarily by Dougan, but Lumsden was well off the mark with the free kick.

Result:
CHESTERFIELD . 0
LUTON TN. 0