

Great goal by Bruce Rioch clinches win

Luton Town 2
Port Vale 0

A GRAND goal by Rioch helped Luton to a 2-0 home win over Port Vale this afternoon.

Luton were at full strength, with left-back Freddie Jardine passing a late fitness test on his injured ankle.

McDerment was named as the Luton substitute after deputising for Jardine last week.

Port Vale made a late change when they included Boulton, originally the substitute, at centre forward in place of the injured Morris.

Town kicked off towards the Oak Road end, and straight away Rioch robbed a blue-shirted Port Vale defender and put Slough through the middle. After a good run Slough shot hard and brought a first minute diving save out of Sharratt.

Winger Mahon made a quick break for the visitors but shot feebly wide.

Poor

Luton burst straight back into another attack and French beat his man before centring, and Whittaker's header was caught easily by Sharratt.

But the goalkeeper's clearance was poor, and again Rioch showed fine anticipation, cut down to the by-line and fired an extremely hard rising shot against the face of the crossbar.

Whittaker was soon back in the match, and after beating James his hard centre bounced clear off Poole's chest.

A through ball from Jardine was stepped over by Allen, and Rioch chased hard with Asprey before losing the ball. But the pair seemed annoyed about something and began pushing each other although the minor incident came to nothing and referee Clarke did not bother to walk across to them.

Read was almost surprised by a long dipping shot from Cullerton, but it went just over the bar and from the goalkick Buxton charged through and won a corner from his shot.

Havoc

Luton looked for another corner when Dougan's centre was challenged for by both Allen and Asprey. The centre half appeared to head over, but the referee awarded a goal kick.

Jardine caused havoc in the Vale goalmouth with two smart centres, the first of which was headed back to him by James and from the second Rioch got a good rebound and had a hard shot blocked.

Read robbed Mahon on the edge of the box and was forced to chase outside his area to clear full-back style.

Sharratt was brought back into the thick of things when he had to dive bravely at the feet of Allen to collect a Rioch free-kick from the touch line.

By
Roger Duckworth

A long clearance by Read was taken on through the middle by Jardine, but Buxton was unable to control the ball in front of Sharratt.

Luton went ahead in the 24th minute through Ian Buxton.

Rioch broke quickly on the left and put across a low centre just out of the reach of Sharratt, and about three boots were pushed vainly in the direction of the ball as it shot across the goal-mouth before BUXTON, following up fast, pushed it past Sharratt.

A few minutes later Whittaker earned a big cheer when he controlled a hard ball from Jardine and cleverly followed it up with a volley, which was wide.

For the second time in minutes Branstion was whistled up for climbing on Chapman's back, and before the free kick could be taken the referee's attention was drawn to a pushing match between the two by his linesman. He had a quick word with the players before allowing the kick to be taken.

Offside

Read was not having a great deal to do, and the accuracy of Port Vale's shooting was summed up in two efforts from Chapman and Boulton which both went into the crowd.

French and Buxton interchanged intelligently before a neatly chipped centre from Slough was caught by Sharratt as it was about to drop onto Allen's forehead.

In the 34th minute Chapman had the ball in the net for Port Vale but the effort, which was very well taken, was disallowed for offside.

Seven minutes before the interval Chapman tried to make up for his earlier offside "goal" when he raced into the area and shot hard and low. But Read was wide awake and made a grand diving save.

Buxton did well to get in a centre after beating off two tough tackles near the corner flag following a good pass by Branstion.

Just before the break Read made rather a lucky save to a Mahon shot following Asprey's free kick. The goalkeeper went out to narrow the angle and



Luton's Ian Buxton and John Moore are foiled by a lunging save from Port Vale 'keeper Sharratt

stooped just in time to stop the low centre.

HT: Luton 1, Port Vale 0.

The second half began with aimless football from both sides. Buxton won a corner which came to nothing and then the same player got a pass through to Allen which the centre forward lost on contact.

The half was five minutes old before the first shot at goal — and then it was a rather weak one from Moore after Slough had put in some hard work in the right hand corner and got the ball to Dougan, who centred.

Port Vale were the first to show any fire and Poole gave a good pass to Cullerton, who was lurking on the right, but his hard, dipping shot went wide.

At the other end there was a mix-up before Slough shot, but this too was off target.

Allen had some bad luck when his powerful drive hit the top of the bar and skidded over after Rioch had forced his way through following a pass from Whittaker.

Opportunity

A good chance fell to Vale winger Mahon in the 58th minute when he was put clear away on his own, but in the same manner as the other Vale forwards had wasted previous chances he shot hastily with only Read to beat and was way off target.

In the 60th minute manager Alan Brown substituted Billy McDerment for winger Graham French, who did not appear to be injured.

Port Vale missed another opportunity when Cullerton collected a long ball near the corner and centred, but Mahon was too slow and the ball went right across the goalmouth.

In the 64th minute the match burst back into life with one of the best goals seen for many years at Luton — and it came from the lethal left foot of Bruce RIOCH.

From outside the penalty area he collected a short pass from Allen, half turned and thumped it spectacularly high into the roof of the net just inside the right hand post.

Four minutes later Rioch tried the same again after a good move by Jardine, and this

time his cannon shot was just wide.

After a foul by Heapman, Branstion won a corner with a long free kick for which he went up to help the attack. But the kick was scrambled away.

Luton increased their pressure and there was one period three-quarters way through when Rioch got a long ball over from the left.

It went too far, Whittaker put it straight back from the right, Slough appeared to be impeded in the box as he tried to shoot, and Allen and Buxton both had headers blocked as the ball bobbed around in front of goal for what seemed to be endless minutes.

Twelve minutes from the end Sharratt made a magnificent save to stop Buxton scoring his second goal. McDerment got in a first-time centre which was so accurate that Buxton only had to nod his head, and although he placed the ball well Sharratt hurled himself across the goal and put the ball round for a corner.

The match really began to hot up, and with nine minutes to go Rioch broke through once again in an exciting burst, outstripped the defence and let go another screaming shot to which Sharratt flung himself to his right and caught the ball against his chest in mid-air.

VERDICT

THE HIGHLIGHT of Luton's win against Sir Stanley Matthews' ill-fated Port Vale was a second-half goal by Bruce Rioch, the like of which is not likely to be seen for a long, long time.

It was a power-drive from more than 20 yards which gave the gallant Sharratt no chance whatever.

Apart from that it was a match in which Luton started well, faded, and then came back with a burst in the last quarter of an hour which left a pleasant memory.

But for long periods in the middle Luton's attack faded out to set the crowd wailing for action.

Luton were always in control of the first half although they could only underline their superiority with a one-goal

interval lead. It came in the 24th minute from Ian Buxton.

Full marks must go to the Port Vale defence for the manner in which they packed their goalmouth — perhaps a little unceremoniously but very effectively — whenever Town made their most dangerous thrust from the wings.

Although they were not the best side seen at Kenilworth Road this season, Port Vale's recent troubles did not seem to have rubbed off too hard on the team, which always played with spirit.

Read didn't have a great deal to do during the first half thanks to the strength of the defence, well marshalled by Branstion and Moore, and with Slough playing some outstanding football.

Backs Dougan and Jardine were always ready to overlap and often created openings in their roles as extra wingers.

TEAMS

LUTON: Read; Dougan, Jardine; Slough, Branstion, Moore; French, Buxton, Allen, Rioch, Whittaker. Sub. McDerment.

PORT VALE: Sharratt; James, Sproson; Poole, Asprey, Wilson; Mahon, Goodfellow, Boulton, Chapman R. Cullerton. Sub: Chapman S. Referee: Mr J. W. Clarke (Warwickshire).

GOALS

BUXTON (Luton) 24 min

RIOCH (Luton) 64 min

Attendance: 12,749.