

Luton are hit by

Luton Town 0
Exeter City 0

LUTON were hit by injuries this afternoon during a surprise 0-0 home draw with lowly Exeter.

Despite passing a fitness test yesterday, Luton right half Alan Slough was still suffering some pain today from his groin injury, and 45 minutes before the kick-off manager Allan Brown said he would drop out.

He brought in Billy McDermont and gave Scots trialist George Potter a chance as substitute.

Exeter dropped right winger Crawford and replaced him with Fudge. Curtis moved to inside left, leaving Blain on the left wing and Corr as substitute.

Luton won a corner in the first minute when French chased a long ball down the right and turned smartly to knock the ball over the line off Balson's legs.

French made it an inswinger and Buxton went close with a header.

Taunt

Newman brought an exclamation from the crowd when he made a long pass to his goalkeeper Smout, who was under close attention from Allen, but the goalkeeper was quickly down to clear.

Remembering Luton's 5-0 win at Exeter in October, the Luton crowd began to taunt the visitors by singing "we want ten this time."

Rioch looked to be just starting on one of his most dangerous runs through the middle when he was obstructed by Blain, but Moore, trying to get the Exeter wall 10 yards from the ball, pushed the free-kick onto Rioch's "wrong" foot.

Luton were attacking the Oak Road end, and Moore was quick to join the attack and win a corner near the flag. But there was nobody in the right spot for Whittaker's kick.

Playing their usual offside trick, the Luton defence stood back to let Banks through. But the referee waved play on but the inside right made a mess of the final pass.

Snap shot

A long freekick from the halfway line by Newman was well caught by Read on his line.

Controlling the ball well in mid-field, Allen found French, who in turn put McDermont away near the flag. He won a corner which was headed away.

But it was not a strong clearance and the ball was collected by Buxton, who tried an unsuccessful snap shot from outside the penalty area.

Ray Whittaker, who seemed to pull a muscle when attempting a left foot centre earlier on, had to cross the touch line to have some treatment from the trainer.

Buxton and Allen caused a stir in the Exeter goalmouth when they chased a high lob which bounced about dangerously before eventually crossing the line for a goalkick.

Moore made ground up the middle before slipping the ball

injuries in shock draw

By
Roger Duckworth

out to Whittaker, but the winger was still in some difficulty and he had to put in a weak cross with his right foot, which was scrambled away.

From a right-wing move Newman rather hastily gave away a corner which Smout did well to catch off Allen's head.

Luton's best move to date came in the 18th minute when Whittaker's header was turned round for a corner after French's accurate cross.

Buxton was Luton's hardest working forward, and again he beat two men on the right before getting the ball across. Allen was just too late with his jump.

A long throw from Dougan gave Moore the chance of another good run after which his centre was just wide of Allen, and the onrushing Whittaker could not reach the ball before the goalkeeper.

Tamely

A pass through the middle found Newman in a good position in front of goal, but with Branston charging in he was put off his stroke and shot tamely into Read's hands.

Branston's earlier charge on Newman had obviously done him no good, and the match had to be stopped in the 25th minute for him to have treatment.

Coughlin had some bad luck for Exeter when he was given room in which to move by Branston, and after working into the box he tried a hard shot which Read just touched over for a corner.

French was pushed over on the touch line by Newman after a piece of smart football by Buxton. The winger took the free kick himself and Buxton was just beaten in the air by Huxford.

On the half hour Luton had what looked to be a legitimate claim for a penalty turned down when Balson fell onto the ball in the corner of the box and certainly appeared to handle it.

Luton's most promising attacks were coming from the right, and Buxton tried a long shot after a pass from French, but he failed to control the ball and it landed high on the roof of the enclosure.

Luton were really in the wars when Jardine had to receive treatment. Both Whittaker and Branston were still limping from their earlier knocks and one wondered at this stage if young George Potter, the trialist from Forfar, would get



Buxton again, going up as Exeter's Curtis appears to be trying a balancing trick

his first taste of Fourth Division football today.

A long lob into the area by Dougan was well reached by Allen, and going for the ball Rioch fell hard. But it was difficult to say whether he was pushed and the referee took no notice.

Impeded

Jardine, who was still in pain, got across a hard centre and Buxton was just unable to get far enough forward to head it past Smout.

McDermont worked hard to push the ball into the middle of the Exeter defence. It was half cleared, and as Banks pushed it back to his goalkeeper, Allen was impeded by two men, but once again his appealing look at the referee was ignored.

In injury time of the first half, Rioch made a vallant effort to put Luton ahead. He charged down to the edge of the penalty area and his hard shot went just over the angle of the posts.

HT: Luton 0, Exeter 0

George Potter came on after half-time for left-winger Whittaker and started his Football League career in a mid-field position.

But he was soon up helping the attack and he fought hard for a loose ball which he got out to Allen on the right. Unfortunately Allen's pass inside went astray.

In the pattern of the first-half it was again Buxton who was about when anything was happening.

And within a couple of minutes of the re-start he jumped high close to the goal and got his head to a through ball which he nodded towards the top left-hand corner of the net.

It looked a goal all the way until Smout sprang across and knocked the ball down with his right hand for a full back to give away a corner.

Dangerous

Again it was the right wing that looked dangerous for Luton, and Dougan, Allen and French worked well together before Smout picked the ball off Buxton's head.

After McDermont and Branston messed up a clearance between them Potter raced in to make a fine tackle on Banks, who had raced clear.

A foul on Rioch brought a free kick that was scrambled away, and immediately afterwards Blain pulled Potter off the ball, and from the free kick, which Rioch hammered passed the defensive wall, Smout made the best diving save of the match.

Potter was showing no nerves whatsoever, and he put Buxton away on the right with the neatest of flicks. The inside right passed to French, whose accurate centre was headed clear and Rioch was upended by Curtis just outside the box.

While everybody was arguing how far away from the ball the defence should stand, French nipped in quietly and chipped it over the Exeter heads, but Smout spotted the move and caught the ball under the bar.

French appeared to be tripped in the area, and with Luton waiting for a penalty Branston caught the high clearance, but was whistled up for hand ball.

The referee's attention was drawn to something that had been thrown into the goalmouth, and a policeman climbed into the crowd to calm things down.

Luton did everything but get the ball in the net. Rioch cut across the middle of the field, turned towards the goal, tried a hard shot that was going wide and even then other Luton forwards were just unable to reach his effort.

Three minutes from the end the ball rolled clear to the onrushing Freddie Jardine, and he scraped the bar with a terrific shot that nearly put an end to Luton's frustration.

VERDICT

THIS was the most frustrating of matches for Luton and their fans. They attacked almost continually but just could not get the ball passed Exeter goalkeeper Smout.

The most pleasing aspect of the match was the fine performance of young Scottish trialist George Potter, who came on for the second half in place of injured Ray Whittaker.

Towards the end Luton continued an all-out assault, and a succession of corners and goalmouth scrambles culminated in a terrific drive from full back Jardine scraping the bar just before the end.

Never will one side be so much on top for so long and not score.

Although playing with confidence in the early stages Luton never looked 21 League positions better than Exeter during the first-half.

Town did most of the attacking but a lot of misjudged passes spoilt promising moves. Of the forwards, Buxton had the highest work rate and he often combined well with French and McDermont.

Luton were hampered by injuries. Whittaker appeared to strain his left leg early on and was unable to chase as hard as normal, and Jardine was left holding what appeared to be his right hip for most of the first-half after a heavy knock. Pivot Branston also received a leg injury.

TEAMS

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

EXETER CITY: Smout; Smyth, Balson; Newman, Harvey, Huxford; Fudge, Banks, Coughlin, Curtis, Blain. Sub: Corr.

Referee: Mr M. Sinclair (Guildford)

Attendance: 12,409