

LUTON 0
CHESTER 0

IN A frustrating match of missed chances, Luton were held to a 0-0 draw by Chester at Kenilworth Road this afternoon.

FOR THE second match of their Easter programme Luton retained the same side that beat Notts County 2-0 yesterday. This meant that Rodney Green was again substitute.

Chester, third from the bottom, had one change, with Mick Metcalf returning on the left wing after a week's absence through injury.

Chester have been playing better than their lowly position indicates and since manager Ken Roberts took over they have won eight of their last ten points.

Bruce Rioch was the first player to have any work to do when he dashed 40 yards to chase a long ball from Whittaker down the left touchline, but he lost the race and the ball went out of play.

Following a throw-in Rioch was presented with a brief opportunity, but he carried the ball one step too far in an effort to get in a position to shoot left-footed and lost possession.

Credit

Luton were awarded a free kick for obstruction on Rioch, but Moore's kick into the box was easily headed away.

The first flowing move can be credited to Luton. Following a hasty but well-placed clearance by Slough, French broke away on the right, worked a clever return move with Allen but then fluffed his centre.

Chester came closest to scoring the first. A long clearance by Evans was gathered on the right by Haddock, who did well to beat Jardine. His shot was well placed and just missed the far post.

A minute later Whittaker missed a glorious chance of putting the Town into an early lead when he completely missed the ball in front of goal after French's centre had been headed on by Buxton and Allen.

Buxton had a chance when Whittaker headed on into the goalmouth, but as he was trying to get into a shooting position he was well tackled by Turner.

Performing well

Rioch, under pressure, got a good pass through to Allen, but the centre-forward was unable to control it quickly enough and was robbed. Rioch regained the clearance, and after being fouled by Evans hammered a free kick inches wide of the foot of the right-hand post.

Luton were performing well individually but seemed unable to penetrate the massed defence as a unit.

Carling moved off his line quickly to gather in the face of the onrushing Whittaker after Jardine had clipped the ball over the defensive wall.

Another good move by Luton, who were almost continually on the attack, deserved a better fate than it received when Rioch shot high and wide. It was started by French on the right who cut inside and then found Rioch with a probing pass which he hit on the turn from a narrow angle.

Further bad luck fell on Allen when he rose well to a Whittaker free kick but his effort was prematurely blocked and then cleared.

Sutton burst through the middle for Chester and brought a good diving save out of Read,

Frustrated Luton drop home point

By
Roger Duckworth

who had had very little to do in the first half.

Read was making good use of the long clearance with the wind in his favour, and from one such long kick Allen was obstructed as he went up to head just outside the penalty area. Rioch took the free kick but was wide.

The swirling wind and hard pitch was making constructive ball-play difficult and in the first half hour there was 16 free kicks, only five of which were against Luton.

Whittaker showed a fine piece of football when he chased a long pass from Allen down to the corner flag, stopped it before it went out, and got in a tremendous left foot centre which beat Carling and was headed for a corner.

From French's flag kick Allen had bad luck in the air, and with Buxton stranded in the back of the net he went close with an overhead kick.

Luton were putting on the pressure and after another mid-field scramble Slough tested Carling with a hard dipping shot which he did well to keep low.

Dougan showed a lot of determination on the right touch line and combined well with French, but the winger's attempted pass again went astray.

Rioch was covering every inch of the field in an effort to spur his team mates on, and once he was right back on his own by-line to get a fine pass back to Read.

Haddock showed he had the edge on Jardine when it came to speed, but on this occasion his centre went behind.

HT: Luton 0, Chester 0.

Luton began the second half where they had left off — on attack. But their first two raids again came to nothing.

But Chester looked the most likely side to go ahead in the early stages of the second half. From a break-away, Metcalf put a good low centre across the goalmouth and Jones, racing in quickly, just failed to get a foot to the cross.

Rioch won a corner on the right which was taken by French and immediately went



Ian Buxton leaps high — but goalkeeper Carling is there

over the line for another. This was also taken by French and easily gathered by Carling.

Loyden had the ball in the net for Chester seven minutes after the restart, but the centre forward had been whistled offside long before he shot.

Another promising move for Luton between Allen, Buxton and French was ruined when the winger's centre was intercepted. But French has some excuse for insisting on cutting inside instead of going round his man for he always had two men closely watching him.

Rescue

Branston came to Luton's rescue when he made a fine tackle on Metcalf, who had broken through the middle on his own with only the centre half to beat. And from the clearance French got a perfect pass through to Allen right on the penalty spot, but he was unable to make use of the opportunity.

Less than a minute later the Luton centre-forward had more bad luck when he dived to head another French cross, only for the wind to swirl the ball away from him.

Fourteen minutes after the interval manager Allan Brown substituted Keith Allen with Rodney Green who got a big cheer as he took the field. Allen also received a sympathetic clap for his strenuous but fruitless efforts.

Mid-field man Alan Slough has scored five Fourth Division goals this season and he showed why this afternoon, with a series of terrific shots most of which were only just off target.

A long free kick by Dougan into the goalmouth produced a do-or-die effort from Green, who was obviously out to impress and who made a fearless dive in the direction of the ball but missed it completely.

Ironical

It was incredible how Luton's all-out attack all afternoon had failed to bring a goal, but whenever they got into a good position or had a go at goal there always seemed to be some

outstretched foot to clear the danger.

It would have been ironical after their fierce defending had Chester given Luton a goal on a plate. This is what they almost did in the 70th minute when full-back Ray Jones, racing back to cut off a Branston clearance, headed back towards his own goal-keeper, misfired, and narrowly missed a post.

Haddock roamed across to the left in the second-half where he proved just as good a player. On one occasion he forced Jardine to foul him, and Singleton's free-kick across the face of the goal was misjudged by Read before Branston gave away a corner.

In the 75th minute Chester made use of their substitute, bringing John Bennett on for Haddock, who had started to limp badly.

Slow handclap

Turner had to receive touch-line treatment after appearing to receive a kick on the head as Green put across a good overhead kick from the right.

As the match moved into its dying stages — and dying is an appropriate word — the Luton fans took up the slow handclap.

With eight minutes to go Sutton found himself in a good position but shot weakly and Read, going full-length, was not given much trouble.

TEAMS

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

CHESTER: Carling, Jones (R), Singleton, Ashworth, Turner, Evans, Haddock, Sutton, Loyden, Jones (L), Metcalf. Sub: Bennett.

Referee: Mr J. K. Taylor (Wolverhampton).

Attendance: 13,266

VERDICT

CHESTER came south to Luton this afternoon with the sole intention of collecting a point. This they did in no uncertain manner.

With little thought of attack they funnelled as many players at a time as they thought necessary — and that was often seven or eight — back into the penalty area, making it almost impossible for Luton to break through.

All that can be said for this holiday match is that top-of-the-table Luton's unbeaten home record is still intact.

Chester relied on break-away sorties into Luton territory while the Town were almost incessantly on attack.

This was one match from which Luton expected both points. They gave a disappointing display yesterday

but at least they beat Notts County. Today they played better but sacrificed a point.

More punch is needed up front, and however corny it may sound it's goals that count. One of these days we are going to see a team come to play at Kenilworth Road that has more ambitions than merely to spend 90 minutes stopping Luton scoring.

The team was playing well individually in the early stages, but things just did not seem to go right when it came to that final vital move.

There was a lack of penetration in the penalty area. French was not having all his own way on the right and the long high centres into the penalty area were bouncing awkwardly on the hard pitch under close attention from Buxton and Allen.