

RIOCH GOAL MADE PROMOTION CERTAIN

BY CHILTERN

HALIFAX TOWN 0, LUTON TOWN 1

EFFICIENTLY and clinically, rather than brilliantly and with the flair of which they are capable, the Town gained the result, at The Shay on Saturday, which ensures their return to the Third Division after three seasons in the wilderness of Division IV.

It was not an emotional occasion, partly because there were only perhaps a couple of hundred of their supporters there, and, in any case, the accomplishment of the feat was rather a case of "when," rather than "if."

As things turned out, the victory more or less assured the Town of the title, but it was one that did not look to be on the cards for a long time.

For one thing, Halifax, not showing much confidence in their ability, even before their own fans, were largely content to play a negative, defensive game and play was dour rather than exciting.

The liveliness of the ball militated against accuracy and this was reflected in the paucity of the constructive midfield build-up by either team.

Indeed, most of the 5,091 spectators had written off the game as a goalless draw well before the Town shook them with a goal that did not come as all that much of a surprise to the faithful fans, who have travelled regularly with the

team up and down the country this season.

Only too well they know that, these days, a free-kick just outside the penalty area, can be fatal to the opposition.

Their inside knowledge was, perhaps, not shared by Halifax, as they lined up for a free-kick awarded for a foul on French and against which they had some cause for complaint.

That be as it may, it led to a spectacular goal by RIOCH, who rocketed the ball into the roof of the net after French had slipped it to him.

Always, it had been perfectly obvious that one goal to either side would probably do the trick and, although Halifax made some show of a rally in the closing stages, they were driven off with something to spare.

This was the Town's ninth away game without a defeat and the Town was usually so

sound that they provided a solid insurance against the record being broken.

In it, Branston and Moore were the strong men, completely dominating the middle, while Dougan and Jardine cut down the threat from the wings and Read showed excellent anticipation and confidence in leaving his goal.

BUILD-UP WAS MISSING

With Slough, who was replaced by McDerment 11 minutes from the end, below his best, and Rioch not really in consistent form, there was a lack of smooth build-up in midfield and few clear-cut chances were created.

Both Buxton and Allen largely found themselves shut in and Brown was a long way from being the danger man he was on his last appearance. Which left French as the biggest source of potential danger and he was not given a great deal of scope.

HALIFAX TOWN: Smith; Russell, Wallace; Pickering, Holt, Hampton; Flower, Massie, Morris, Ryden, McCarthy. Substitute: Wooler.

LUTON TOWN: Read; Dougan, Jardine; Slough (McDerment), Branston, Moore; Brown, Buxton, Allen, Rioch, French.

Referee: R. Capey, Crewe.