

Brilliant Luton make it a winning debut

Luton Town 4

Oldham Ath 0

68/69

PLAYING football to match the brilliant weather, Luton beat Oldham 4-0 at Kenilworth Road this afternoon in their opening match in Division Three.

Before the start we saw sunshine — a commodity that has been missing for weeks. The recent rain left the new grass in beautiful condition, and the bright green turf combined with the gay shirts of the holiday-mood crowd to make a colourful picture.

Luton were at full strength, although there were several changes from the side that won Division IV last year.

Mike Harrison, from Plymouth, replaced Ray Whittaker on the left wing, Laurie Sheffield came into lead the attack, and Brian Lewis, from Coventry, played at inside right in the place of Ian Buxton, who is still on cricket duty with Derbyshire.

Last year's centre forward Keith Allen dropped to right half, and Alan Slough moved across to left half in place of John Moore, who was substitute.

Moore is now fully fit but has not taken part in any of the pre-season friendlies.

Changes

Oldham made several changes from the team announced yesterday. Joyce came in at left half for Bowie, who was substitute. In an effort to find the right blend of attack the forwards were swapped round occasionally.

An early foul on Bruce Rioch gave Luton a half-way line free kick, but Rioch took it too quickly and neither Sheffield nor Lewis had time to get into position.

Luton clicked into gear quickly, and with Sheffield and Lewis harrying around the middle early raids came from both wings.

After a 40-yard burst Rioch slipped the ball to Lewis inside the penalty box, and Luton were unfortunate to have an appeal for a penalty rejected by silver-haired Mr Osborne.

But they did get a corner, and from this, taken by French, Branston's effort was deflected over. From the second Rioch saw his shot soar high over the bar.

Splendid centre

Oldham were taking longer to settle, but one particularly good effort from full back Wood from 30 yards went quite close.

Three minutes later Rioch was off mark again after a splendid centre from French had been punched clear by Best.

The crowd was large and enthusiastic, and what a roar it set up in the 12th minute when Terry Branston charged up-field to send a tremendous drive from a long throw towards goal. Best just managed to push it round for a corner from which Branston went close yet again — this time with a header.

Luton could smell success. They kept up the pressure, and in the 14th minute Harrison cut a ball back from the by-line, and Allen's flashing header was saved on the line by Best, who had to dive full length.

COMEDIAN Eric Morecambe used his new season ticket for the first time at Kenilworth Road today.

At half time he told Roger Duckworth: "It's marvellous. Aren't they a great team?"

"Luton would have had at least five by now if it hadn't been for Oldham's goal-keeper."

Alan Slough was showing great form in the early stages. Three times he cut out dangerous moves and once went through on his own to shoot narrowly over the top.

Under such pressure Oldham had to crack — and they did, in the 17th minute.

Brian Lewis, still running his heart out, was tripped in the penalty area by left half Joyce, and new winger HARRISON sent Best the wrong way to score with his left-foot spot kick.

Luton were delighting the shirt-sleeved crowd with some grand football, and a perfect pass from Sheffield down the left touch line found Harrison at full speed, and the winger's shot from just inside the corner of the box shaved the far post.

Mystery

A magnificent pass from Harrison across the field found French, who won a corner from which Best, who anticipated Branston's header, made a good save.

Luton had no end of new ways to goal, but how they didn't score in the 29th minute is a mystery.

Sheffield, Lewis and Allen all took part in a sizzling move that ended with Lewis dribbling round Best and full back Dyle, and his shot at goal looked there until Best, dashing back to his line, found the ball tucked under his arm.

It was cleared but Dougan burst back, and his tremendous drive was headed off the line by Doyle.

In the same mad minute Rioch was awarded a free kick on the corner of the box and Best somehow kicked it over.

Again Luton came back and another hard, low shot, this time by French, was half missed by the diving Best, but he clawed his way after it and just averted it from the path of the on-rushing Sheffield.

This was tremendous stuff — and it was all happening in the Oak Road goalmouth, behind which Luton's most ardent youngsters mass every week.

This afternoon they sang and waved their scarfs to the point

**By
ROGER DUCKWORTH**

of exhaustion as this new-look Town pressed with skill and enthusiasm for that elusive second goal.

What a brilliant player Lewis is. On his next sortie towards goal he collected a pass from French, went through the middle on his own, jumping over three scything tackles, before once again seeing his shot at goal brilliantly saved by Best, who must have been wondering what on earth had hit him.

Two minutes before half-time Luton's relentless pressure paid off again, when ALLEN scored a terrific goal.

Laurie Sheffield, who had been having some foul luck with his scoring attempts, made space for himself and crashed a shot against the bar.

With the Oldham defence running round in ever-decreasing circles the ball was scrambled away and ALLEN, hovering in expectancy, thumped it through the milling bodies to score just inside the right-hand post.

HT: Luton 2 Oldham 0

Oldham's manager, former Irish international Jimmy McIlroy, who had been sitting in the stand during the first half, appeared on the touch line at the start of the second with Luton boss Allan Brown.

Oldham began the second half by substituting Bowie for Joyce.

Graham French had touch-line treatment after a particularly good run in which he beat Wood. Bowie was soon on the scene with a run through the middle, but his shot went harmlessly wide.

Soon after the restart Luton sent on John Moore as substitute for Graham French.

After Chapman teased the Luton defence Dougan relieved the danger by breaking up the raid on the left.

Hard shot

Lewis showed that he could be allowed nothing at all, and after combining with Harrison he displayed his hard shot with a right footer that went a foot over the top.

Luton's hard man in defence, Terry Branston, received treatment after stopping a full-strength drive on the side of the head. It knocked him straight off his feet, but in true Branston fashion he just got up shook his head and tried to carry on, but his legs eventually gave in.

Oldham had been coming more into their own after the break, although it was obvious that Luton were letting them bring the ball on to them.

But there was no distinguishing the joy of full back JARDINE when he hammered a



Laurie Sheffield gets the best of this high-level tackle on his old team mates.

25-yard shot into the net in the 61st minute.

Rioch was allowed all the space he wanted as he raced up the middle. Jardine was creating an overlap on the left, received his pass and without thinking twice he thumped it past the amazed Best.

After Read had saved a shot from Blair, Dougan worked a reverse move with Lewis, and looking determined not to be outdone by his full back partner he tried a shot at goal and won a corner.

Accurate

After the fury and excitement of the first half Luton settled down to play a more controlled blend of football which was equally pleasing to watch.

Lewis was still running around to the consternation of the Oldham defence, and the visitors were giving the Luton half backs Slough and Allen more room in which to move.

With French off the field Lewis took over as right wing corner-taker. On one occasion his accurate flag kick was met high in the goalmouth by Sheffield, whose header flashed inches wide of a post.

Rioch was playing an intelligent role. He was helping out where ever he was needed both in defence and up front. The crowd, somewhat disappointed at not seeing more of his hard shooting, raised a cheer when he hit a tremendous left foot shot just wide in the 75th minute.

With 12 minutes to go of their opening performance Luton nearly made it 4-0.

Harrison received a pass on the left, controlled it beautifully, went round the outside of his man and smashed a terrific shot against the underside of the bar which was scrambled clear as it bounced about.

Attack

A good looking Oldham attack on the right between Magee and Blair was spoilt when Magee pushed the ball too far ahead and it went out of play.

Towards the end both sets of players were looking extremely tired, the first match of the season combined with the warm sunshine having sapped everybody's energy.

John Moore gave away a corner kick instead of risking a clearance, but Oldham were

looking a bit jaded by this time and they made nothing of it.

Branston and Slough floored each other when they collided in the penalty area, but play carried on and Branston, first on his feet, pulled his team-mate up.

The excitement of the first half reared its head again in the last minute, and Lewis was again the instigator.

He opened up the defence and passed to Keith Allen, whose full-blooded, close-range shot was brilliantly saved by Best. A full-back only half cleared and Rioch hit the inside of a post and bounced clear.

Parry

With the match in its dying seconds Lewis received the ovation that he richly deserved when he scored Luton's fourth goal.

He passed to Mike Harrison. Harrison shot, again Best made a great save, but he could only parry it down and LEWIS was on hand to smash it delightedly into the net.

At the end there were tremendous scenes of excitement — but ones that will not please the Luton ground staff. For hundreds of Luton fans invaded the pitch to congratulate the newcomers to the Third Division.

TEAMS

LUTON TOWN: Read; Dougan, Jardine; Allen, Branston, Slough; French, Lewis, Sheffield, Rioch, Harrison. Sub: Moore.
OLDHAM ATHLETIC: Best; Doyle, Wood; Blair, Hunter, Joyce; Magee, Chapman, Johnston, Philpott, Aitken. Sub: Bowie.

Referee: Mr J. Osborne (Ipswich).

GOALS

HARRISON (Luton) pen, 17 min
ALLEN (Luton) 43 min
JARDINE (Luton) 61 mins
LEWIS (Luton) 89 min

Attendance: 14,747