CHEERS AS TOWN GET OFF TO A SPARKLING START

Oldham rarely in the hunt

2843

10-8-68

By CHILTERN

LUTON TOWN got off to a sparkling start on their return to the Third Division. If they had had any luck at all they would have been much more than two goals ahead of Oldham at half-time.

The large Kenilworth Road crowd gave them a great ovation as new man Mike Harrison (penalty) and Keith Allen got the goals. Another, 14 minutes after the interval, scored by Freddie Jardine, assured them of the points.

It was a dreadfully wet week, the weather turned fine, as it almost invariably does for the first match of the soccer season, and there was bright sunshine shining on a largely shirt-sleeved crowd as they waited for the start.

The pitch, on which there was plenty of grass, seemed to have made a good recovery from its thorough soaking, and looked to be in good condition.

The Town were as selected, with French returning after injury. John Moore, who has not played in any of the pre-season trials, was the substitute on the ground that he is short of match practice.

So, the middle line remained as it has been, with Keith Allen retaining the right-half berth. All three close-season signings, Brian Lewis, Laurie Sheffield and Mike Harrison were on view.

OLDHAM CHANGE

Oldham made a late change, preferring Walter Joyce at left-half to Jim Bowie, who became the substitute.

Both were first on to the pitch, five minutes before the kick-off, striking strip of tangerine shirts and light-blue shorts.

The crowd looked to be in the region of 14,000 when Branston won the toss, and as usual he decided to defend the Kenilworth Road end.

A brisk movement on the Town left brought a rather wild clearance by Doyle. Lewis returned the ball deep into the penalty area but was later caught offside and the movement broke down.

PENALTY CLAIM

Dougan next swung across a centre, for which Lewis challenged, and Hunter was a little fortunate to breast the ball just wide of the oncoming inside-right.

Riech set the Town rolling with a long run, well into the Oldham half before passing to Lewis. The Town looked in vain for a penalty as Lewis fell, and all they achieved was a couple of corner-kicks.

When the ball came out after Branston's rush had failed, Riach drove the ball high over the bar.

When Oldham came into it, a slip by Slough let in Chapman. He was challenged by Reed, and the result was a scorner. Wood followed with a rising drive that Read was able to watch go over.

The Town suddenly struck through French. He was in pierce brilliantly before swinging over a centre that Best, standing on the penalty spot, could only deflect to Riach, just outside the penalty area, but once again the inside-left was off the mark with his powerful left-footed shot.

FLYING SAVE

French was coming more into the game now, and after he had failed to control the ball pass Wood and Joyce, he took a right-footed swipe straight at the feet of Branston. The famous centre-half was nothing up at full belt, and it needed a flying save by Best at the far post to prevent Wood from opening the score.

From the corner-kick, Branston headed narrowly over. He was certainly showing ambitious ideas about figuring as a marksman.

Again Best saved Oldham with a diving dive, this time from a well placed header by Lewis. Slough had begun the attack with a strong run. Certainly, the more persistent pressure was coming from the Town.

Oldham were now back on to the defensive, and the Town gained a free-kick about two yards outside the apex of the penalty area, when Magee brought down Hunter. Riach took it, elected not to try his usual power drive on this occasion, but instead lifted it in the direction of Sheffield. The centre-forward, however was hustled off the ball by Hunter.

PENALTY GOAL

Then, Slough came through in great style to try his luck from over 20 yards, but the ball went too high.

There was consolation for Lewis and the Town in the 17th minute for the refusal to award a penalty earlier. This time, Lewis was tripped by Joyce and the referee had no hesitation in pointing to the penalty spot. HARRISON was entrusted with the kick, made Best go the wrong way, and easily placed the ball in the other corner of the net, to give the Town a well-deserved lead.

Oldham hit back, and after a corner-kick, the ball came out to Philpott over a crowd of players, and his shot went only marginally over the bat, with Read beaten.

A GREAT SHOT

Back came the Town, and Sheffield pushed the ball through to Harrison, who was on it in a trice to unleash a tremendous, left-footed drive that missed the far post by inches, with Best completely beaten. The crowd rose to this effort. Harrison was certainly making his presence felt.

Lewis, too, was harassing the Oldham defence, and another foul on him led to a shot by Slough that looked like going through until it struck Hunter.

After some brief Oldham pressure had been driven off without much trouble, Harrison opened out the game with a sweeping pass to French, who, after being stopped prematurely, gained a corner for which Branston again came up. Best had considerable trouble in getting the ball clear.

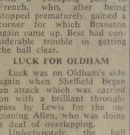
LUCK FOR OLDHAM

Luck was on Oldham's side again when Sheffield began an attack which was carried on with a brilliant throough-pass by Lewis for the oncoming Allen, who was doing a deal of overlapping.

Unfortunately, the ball bounced badly. Lewis, following up, took it and dribbled his way through, but got himself angled out of the process. Even so, he produced a drive that Best, running back towards his goal, was fortunate enough to find landing in his arms.

PRESSURE

This was the start of tremendous pressure from the Town, but they were a long way from having the best of luck with their finishing. Following a corner on the right, Dougan produced a



Keith Allen increased the Town's lead with a great goal from 20 yards after 42 minutes.

terrific drive which was booked for the net until Doyle got his head to the ball and deflected it.

Lewis sent French through, but Best just got a hand to his shot and Joyce put behind before Lewis, coming in quickly, could fasten on to the rebound.

The Town were playing sparkling football and might have had a more emphatic lead had the ball run more kindly for them.

There was another escape for Oldham following a brilliant run by Lewis. He beat three opponents in short space before trying to turn the ball in from an angle, but Best was too quick for him.

Best was being kept in full employment, and had to go full-length again to cut out a low cross by Riach.

SOMETHING FOR READ

Read's first serious task came about ten minutes from half-time, when Wood, who had made an earlier good attempt, forced the goalkeeper to pull a long shot down from under the bar. Other than that, nearly all the goal-threat was coming from the fast-moving Town.

Another corner to the Town brought more trouble to the Oldham defence, but there was a rame finish, with Sheffield heading the ball into Best's hands. Then a free kick for hands by Magee, Sheffield was left with a good chance but he hit the bar.

GREAT GOAL

However, all was not lost, because the ball came out to ALLEN who, from 20 yards, hit a great low drive that beat even the agile Best and got in just inside the post to give the Town a somewhat belated two-goal lead. It was a great goal and came after 42 minutes.

Then, Allen did his side a good turn at the other end when he headed the ball over after a dangerous situation had developed from a centre by Chapman from the corner-kick. Blair made a hook shot that went too high. Half-time:

LUTON	2
OLDHAM	0

The Town were given a big ovation as they left the field at half-time, and they certainly deserved it, because there is no doubt that had their luck really been in, and Best had not been in such brilliant form, their lead would have been considerably greater.

At the start of the second half, Oldham brought on their substitute, Bowie, for Joyce.

With three minutes of the second half gone, French was

injured, and play went on while he received attention outside the touchline.

Oldham had their Town substitute, John Moore, was taking off his tracksuit, and he came on when French had at end of the game for French.

RESHUFFLE

This caused a reshuffle of the Town team, with Allen going to outside-right, and Slough moving to right-half to enable Moore to take over his usual position.

There was applause for French as he came along the side of the ground in front of the main stand, limping heavily on his way to the dressing room.

Meanwhile, there had been a typical goalward dash by Riech, but he found himself off balance in the end, and slashed the ball across the goal.

Oldham had been showing more life and fight in attack than in the first half, but they were being well contained by a sound defence.

There was not quite the same sparkle about the Town now, but even so they were going along comfortably enough.

Oldham were still moving more dangerously than they had been, and in one attack Branston's head received the full force of a hard drive, and he had to have attention before he could carry on.

Then, at the end of a quiet phase, came another brilliant goal for the Town, and from an unexpected quarter this time. JARDINE it was who got his name into the list of scorers.

Riach began it all by racing out of defence with the ball at his feet to midway into the Oldham half. The visiting defenders seemed undecided what his intentions, and he pushed the ball to Jardine, who had followed up strongly. The left-back wasted no time, for, from nearly 25 years, he let fly a humdinger of a shot that landed in the far top corner of the net with Best absolutely helpless. This was after 59 minutes.

BRANSTON DAZED

Before the game could be re-started, there had to be further attention to Branston, who was still looking dazed from his earlier mishap.

That goal put the Town back on good terms with themselves, and they began to press again. When Dougan tried to emulate his full-back partner's feat, he gained a corner, but Best was dealing expertly with that type of award.

Read was brought into action through a long shot by

Left-back Freddie Jardine got a spectacular third goal for the Town 14 minutes after the interval.

Bowie, and the ball bounced away from him as he went full-length, but there was plenty of time in which to recover.

Dougan again did the overlap from a free-kick by Riech and his centre looked dangerous until Sheffield was penalised for pushing Best.

There was a further stoppage while Blair had attention for a leg injury, and Branston still seemed to be feeling the effects of his head injury.

Riech came into the picture with a long raking low drive that whipped just wide.

NEARLY ANOTHER

With the Town assuming command again, Lewis worked the ball cleverly in midfield to send away Harrison, but the winger's shot rose much too high.

Town very nearly got another goal when Harrison let go a fine drive, but it hit the underpart of the bar and came back into play.

OLDHAM BRISKER

In a brisk Oldham attack during the time when they were down to ten men, because

How the goals came

HARRISON (penalty) for Luton after 17 minutes

ALLEN for Luton after 42 minutes

JARDINE for Luton after 59 minutes

LEWIS for Luton after 89 minutes

Blair was off th field changing a boot. Read saved with his legs from Johnson shot, and then pushed the ball behind as a measure of safety.

With two minutes remaining, Oldham had another stroke of luck as Best clawed out a point-blank drive by Allen and Riech's shot from the rebound was stopped against the foot of a post with the goalkeeper out of position.

A minute from the end, the town scored their fourth goal when LEWIS, after having had one shot beaten out, followed up to net from close range after Best had stopped another power drive from Harrison.

Result:

LUTON TOWN	4
OLDHAM	0

TEAMS

LUTON TOWN: Read; Dougan, Jardine; Allen, Branston, Slough; Lewis, Sheffield, Rioch, Harrison. Substitute: Moore.

OLDHAM ATHLETIC: Best; Doyle, Wood; Blair, Hunter, Reed; Magee, Chapman, Jolston, Philport, Aitken. Substitute: Bowie.

Referee: Mr. J. R. Osborne, of Ipswich.

Mike Harrison, Town's new left-winger, scored his side's first goal of the season from the penalty spot, in the 17th minute.