

Rotherham fight but in vain

By CHILTERN

TWO smart goals by Bruce Rioch within the first minutes of the game put Luton Town into a happy position in their important game with Rotherham United at Kenilworth Road this afternoon.

Rioch shot the first in opportunist style when a Rotherham defender made him a "gift," and his second was a cannonball from 35 yards.

Rotherham managed to pull one back, but Brian Lewis restored the Town's position with a neat goal a couple of minutes before the interval.

Conditions were more suitable for cricket than football, and the crowd, which was promising to be large again, was mostly in shirt-sleeve order. Happily, the Town were back to full strength, with French and Harrison returning on the wings, and John Moore, obviously because of his lack of serious match practice, nominated as the substitute after having recovered from groin strain.

Rotherham lacked the services of Alan Gilliver, their centre-forward, who broke his nose in the match with Tranmere last Saturday, and there was a forward reshuffle which led to Steve Downes leading the attack, and the youngster, Billy Todd, coming in on the left wing.

LEEDS SCOUT

Among the spectators was a scout from Leeds United, with the obvious object of having a look at Bruce Rioch, as have

TEAMS

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

ROTHERHAM UNITED: Hill; Swift, Hague; Quinn, Watson, Filer; Leggat, Storr, Downs, Bentley, Todd. Substitute: Harrity.

Referee: Mr. G. W. Hill of Kirby Muxloe.

several other First Division clubs.

For a change, Branston lost the toss, which meant that the Town were denied the chance of kicking first to their favourite end — the Oak Road goal.

From the start, the Town were on the attack, with Lewis and Rioch prominent, but Hill was not brought into action.

Rotherham's first dangerous attack came when Quinn came through strongly to make a drive that Read, well out of his goal, steered around a post for a corner.

BRILLIANT SAVE

This was cleared, and the Town came back for Lewis to swing on to a through pass, and it needed a brilliant, diving save by Hill as Sheffield challenged.

The Town were moving smartly in approach, but French wasted a good opportunity after he had been sent away by Rioch, by placing the ball much too close to Hill.

Again Lewis was unlucky, this time with a well-directed header, which Hill saved at full-length.

There certainly was some punch about the Town attack, and Harrison seemed to take the Rotherham defence completely by surprise with a low cross that flashed across the goal with Hill apparently rooted to his line.

Brilliant anticipation by Slough saved the Town when their offside trap failed to work, and Todd threatened to break through, and then in the tenth minute the Town obtained the goal they had been threatening.

It was the product of a shocking back pass by Hague,

who sent the ball straight to RIOCH. Rioch, as he has done so often in the past, made a beeline for goal. Possibly the Rotherham defence expected him to pass, but he carried on and from the edge of the penalty area smacked in a low drive that beat Hill completely and gave the Town a deserved lead.

There was a strong reaction from Rotherham, who came back to force two corners, the first of which was disputed by French, who was spoken to by the referee.

However, the Town survived, without undue difficulty, and again came away through Lewis and Harrison in a promising movement that ended when Sheffield was out-headed by Watson.

Another corner for Rotherham, which came when the ball cannoned off Branston, was brilliantly cut out by Read, and Rotherham were certainly putting up a stern resistance.

RIOCH AGAIN

Then, RIOCH, whose shooting had been off the beam in previous matches, struck again for the Town with as good a goal as we shall probably see this season.

French made it possible by bringing the ball inside before pushing it to Rioch, who, from 35 yards let fly with terrific pace, and Hill was



BRUCE RIOCH put Town ahead after only 10 minutes when he capitalised on a bad mistake by a Rotherham defender.

Five minutes later Rioch crashed in a spectacular goal from 35 yards to send the fans almost mad with excitement.

beaten from the time the ball left the inside-left's foot. This was after 15 minutes, and the crowd went mad with excitement.

Twice French wasted good opportunities by placing the ball too close to Hill.

Rotherham were fighting back, and were awarded a free-kick some 12 yards outside the penalty area. The Town hotly disputed it, but it led to Rotherham getting back into the game with a goal in the 25th minute, which was the first the Town had conceded this season.

OLD TRICK

In point of fact, the Town defence fell for the old trick of someone running over the ball and Quinn, coming from behind to push the ball through to Watson.

The arrival of the centre-half in attack seemed to take the Town by surprise, and his forward pass was pushed on by Storr, and finally booted

into the roof of the net by DOWNES.

Even then, there were appeals from the Town, presumably for offside.

A bad foul on Lewis brought a free-kick, and danger to Rotherham was cleared with some difficulty.

Then there was a narrow escape for the Town when Leggat was allowed to go through as the result of an apparent misunderstanding between Read and Branston, and in the end the ball was



Brian Lewis got a timely third goal for the Town a couple of minutes before the interval, to stabilise his side's dominating position.

scrambled marginally for a corner.

Some of the decision by the referee were far from the liking of the crowd, as when he refused an appeal for hands against Downes, and then penalised Rioch for a foul on Leggat.

Quite a deal of boot changing was going on, involving Slough, French and Dougan, which seemed to indicate that the going was other than expected.

STOPPAGE

There was a stoppage when Watson infiltrating deep into the Town penalty area collided with Branston, and there were urgent signals for

ambulance men, and a stretcher. However, Watson had other ideas, because after a stoppage of nearly two minutes he was up and about again, though feeling his midriff gingerly.

Since Rotherham had scored the Town's play had not flowed so brilliantly as it had in the opening phase, when they threatened to take Rotherham apart.

THIRD GOAL

Brilliant work by Lewis put the Town back on the attack again.

The Town were badly needing a goal to stabilise the position, and sure enough it came after 43 minutes through LEWIS. What led up to it was a rare old mix-up in which French and Allen were primarily concerned. French had a shot beaten down, Allen gained possession, made ground and then crossed the ball low. Lewis had his back to the goal, but showed quick thinking in turning round, changing feet, and banging the ball past Hill from close range.

Immediately afterwards Allen had to receive attention. Half-time:

**LUTON 3
ROTHERHAM 1**

In the first minute of the second half, there was a buzz of expectation as Rioch picked up a clearance, and the crowd looked for the completion of a hat-trick. However, this time he did not hit the ball truly, and it went first bounce to Hill.

With four minutes gone, Tommy Docherty, the Rotherham manager, appeared on the touchline to pull out Watson, who was still suffering from the effects of his first-half injury.

On came the substitute, Harrity, and this caused a reshuffle, with Swift going to centre-half and Harrity taking over at right-back.

The Rotherham defence got itself in a tangle, and Harrison, streaming through the inside-right position, should have done better than blaze the ball high over from 15 yards.

Another chance fell to Harrison soon afterwards. This time the outside-left kept his shot low. It was deflected slightly, and Hill threw himself on it at the last split second.

There was also a last-second clearance by the goalkeeper when French threatened to bamboozle the whole defence, and finally Hill had to throw himself at the winger's feet.

STREAMLINED

The Town had resumed in the same streamlined mood they had shown at the start of the first half, and Hill was the busiest player on the field, being brought violently into

action again by the sharp-shooting Lewis.

There had been some re-jigging of the Rotherham forward line, which now had Todd on the right wing and Leggat on the left.

The Town pressure continued and Harrison won a corner which was hastily cleared.

Leggat was unlucky with a storming drive that just cleared the crossbar, and then Rotherham, still fighting gamely, gained a corner, with which Read dealt capably.

If more goals were to come it looked more likely to be from the Town. Harrison just missed the far post after a shot by Lewis had been beaten down. The goal-kick was badly taken by Hill, and Sheffield might have scored had not the goalkeeper reacted quickly.

Rioch produced another thunderbolt, this time off target, and a strong run by Slough earned him a corner, from which he sliced his shot wide.

Hill was in some amount of trouble through challenges by Sheffield and Lewis.

PENALISED

Lewis next made a tremendous effort to break through a wall of four defenders, but was penalised, which produced a storm of criticism from the crowd.

Rotherham, now inaccurate in their passing, were less in the game than at any previous stage, though Hague, venturing up into attack, gave Read a stern test with a first-time shot.

With 17 minutes left, the Town introduced their substitute, John Moore, after Sheffield had hurt a leg in making a goalmouth dash. Moore settled in to his own position of left-half, with Lewis moving into the middle, Rioch going to inside-right, Allen to inside-left, and Slough switching to right-half.

How the goals came

RIOCH for Luton after 10 minutes

RIOCH for Luton after 15 minutes.

DOWNES for Rotherham after 25 minutes.

LEWIS for Luton after 43 minutes.

In a strong raid by the Town, sparked off by Lewis and Rioch, Harrison nearly scored with a header that Hill reached at full stretch.

PERMUTATIONS

Rotherham were now trying all sorts of forward permutations in a bid to improve their situation, but were making little impression on the Town defence.

Swift headed behind for safety when Rioch was threatening to break through with a pass by Harrison, and from the corner Slough, now in an attacking role, made a chance for Allen, but Hill saved comfortably.

Even though they could not increase their lead, the Town were in no trouble.

A couple of minutes from the end there were strong appeals for a penalty by the Town when a shot by Rioch struck Swift, apparently on the hand. Result:

LUTON TOWN ... 3

ROTHERHAM ... 1