

RIOCH POWER SHOTS BLAST ROTHERHAM

Luton 3 Rotherham 1: by PETER GILL

WHEN Luton officials won promotion last season they said that Division II at the earliest opportunity was their next ambition. It was no idle boast.

They have a well organised, efficient team who beat Rotherham, one of the better teams in the Third Division, more easily than the scoreline would suggest.

Even Tommy Docherty, the Rotherham manager, who is as partisan as they come, admitted that few teams going to Luton will avoid defeat this season. At the same time Docherty was not at all happy about the midfield marking.

No wonder because Bruce Rioch, target for so many clubs—the latest being Leeds United—scored twice in the first quarter hour from well outside the penalty area.

In each case he was unchallenged and the ball flew into the back of the net. After that a runaway Luton victory looked likely, but Rotherham showed commendable spirit in the way they fought back despite the fact that they could never command in midfield.

That was where Luton held sway with Rioch and Alan Slough, another 20-year-old star who is forcing his way to the forefront, very much on top.

CRISIS

There was a minor crisis for Luton after Steve Downes pulled back a goal after 25 minutes. It was the first Luton had conceded this season and it seemed to affect the immaculate covering of the defence. Graham Leggat might have snatched an equaliser but the chance slipped by and Luton regained their equilibrium.

The goal they so badly needed was snatched two minutes from half-time by Brian Lewis, who gave another illustration of Docherty's complaint about the slack marking. Lewis had time to turn around and plant the ball into the net.

The second-half was much of a shambles because of the latitude that was given to some rather grim tackling. Rotherham were not helped by an injury to Dave Watson, their centre half, who suffered badly bruised ribs which caused a defensive reshuffle.

Luton did not make the most use of this and they, too, suffered a casualty a quarter-hour from the end when Laurie Sheffield went off with a strain.

Rotherham were game fighters but were saved from heavier defeat by brilliant goalkeeping from Alan Hill. They never had the striking power of Luton.



... scored two
BRUCE RIOCH