

Luton go top after Rioch wonder-goal

By ROGER DUCKWORTH

LUTON TOWN 5 BARNSELEY 1

BRUCE RIOCH, Luton's crown prince of soccer, has scored many superb goals in his short, but brilliant career. None were better than the one he shattered Barnsley with in the 20th minute last night which began the rot for the Yorkshiremen as exuberant Luton went nap.

Picking up the ball 15 yards in his own half, Bruce accelerated through the Barnsley defence, beat four men en-route, and crashed the ball into the goal in full flight.

If you watch football as a lifelong hobby, you will never see a better goal than this one.

Luton's biggest League crowd of the season, almost 16,000, was privileged to see it. It was the most exciting moment of a thrilling night that set the fans chanting: "Rioch for England."

As well as being its highlight, this goal was the match's turning point. For until Rioch took things in his own hands, Barnsley had been very much on top.

Drizzle had made the pitch greasy, and the visitors used the short ball to better effect than Luton, who preferred the big boot up the middle. And it wasn't coming off!

Doubtful

But success must have its price. Luton winger Mike Harrison and left back Fred Jardine both suffered hamstring strains, and are doubtful for Saturday's match at Gillingham. Jardine was substituted by John Moore.

Barnsley's tactics were paying off in the early stages when Robson, Bettany, Evans and Howard all went close. And Earnshaw could have equalised when he was given far too much room by the Luton defence. Unfortunately for Barnsley he fluffed his shot.

So Luton return to the top of the Third Division. And they deserve to. Their exciting display last night is the sort of soccer that is sure to bring the crowds flooding back.

Their defence was caught once or twice by nippy Barnsley, but the Town attack is going to want some stopping. With Brian Lewis buzzing around tirelessly and Laurie Sheffield distributing chances galore down the middle, they look a classy set-up.

Add to this the powerful skill of Rioch and the skill of wingers Harrison and Graham French, and you have a real future. Last night the inside-men did not get the best of service from the wings, but Harrison was limping badly on the left, and French can argue that his accurate corners brought two goals in five minutes.

Branston goal

In the 29th minute skipper Branston headed in a French corner, and in the 34th Lewis finished off a Harrison header from another.

Barnsley must have wondered what was going on. Having played the better football in the first half-hour, they found themselves three down.

Luton's sporting crowd was not slow to appreciate the skill

of the northerners, and they gave generous applause to their fast, clever moves.

Commiserations must go to poor old Sheffield, who can do everything except score a goal for Luton. He had efforts stopped on the line, nudged over the top, and then when his best chance came early in the second-half from a Dougan free-kick, he missed it completely.

Tony Read had another good night in the Luton goal, and he cannot take any of the blame for Barnsley's 52nd-minute goal. The Luton defence stood back waiting for offside to be blown. It wasn't, and Read had to dash out of his area to stop Evans.

He handled the ball, but winger Earnshaw collected the rebound and shot into the empty net from well out. This was a good piece of refereeing and intelligent use of the advantage rule by Mr Walters.

Three minutes later Lewis hit a free kick through the defensive wall for Luton's fourth, and netted again a minute later, but was pulled back for "foot up."

Hard tasks

Dougan and Moore had the hardest tasks of the night against tricky wingers Earnshaw and Hamstead, and in midfield Alan Slough and Keith Allen were outstanding.

In the 64th minute Allen scored a brilliant goal that was overshadowed only by that scored by Rioch.

After a long, dogged solo run, Allen shielded the ball cleverly before crashing it past Arblaster from the edge of the penalty box. And in the last seconds Arblaster made a fine save to a Slough shot that almost made it six of the best for the Town.

And in the last minute Rioch received a painful kick in the face when Sheffield was propelled into him by a defender as he was racing for goal.

There is little doubt that in this form, Luton deserve their top of the table position. They are also going to take some knocking off their perch.

Luton Town: Read; Dougan, Jardine (Moore); Allen, Branston, Slough; French, Lewis, Sheffield, Rioch, Harrison.

Barnsley: Arblaster; Murphy, Booth; Bettany, Howard, Brookes; Earnshaw, Evans, Robson, Bradbury, Hamstead. Sub — Graham.

Referee — Mr P. R. Walters (Bridgwater).

Attendance — 15,899.

DIVISION III										
Luton	4	3	1	0	12	2	7			
Mansfld	4	3	0	1	7	4	6			
Brightn	4	2	1	1	11	5	5			
Plymth	3	2	1	0	6	3	5			
Torquay	4	2	1	1	8	4	5			
Roth'm	4	2	1	1	9	7	5			
Walsall	4	1	3	0	5	4	5			
Barrow	4	2	1	1	5	5	5			
Watford	3	1	2	0	3	1	4			
Swindon	3	1	2	0	1	0	4			
Orient	3	1	2	0	6	5	4			
Bristol R	4	1	2	1	7	7	4			
Trnmre	3	2	0	1	4	4	4			
Reading	4	1	2	1	4	5	4			
Crewe	4	1	2	1	4	7	4			
Bournth	4	1	1	2	7	5	3			
Stockpt	4	0	3	1	5	6	3			
Gillghm	4	1	1	2	3	5	3			
Shwsby	4	1	1	2	3	5	3			
H'pool	3	0	2	1	1	2	2			
Nthmptn	2	0	1	1	1	2	1			
Barnsly	4	0	1	3	4	10	1			
Oldham	4	0	1	3	1	12	1			
Southpt	4	0	0	4	3	10	0			



Arblaster in the Barnsley goal is left stranded as Brian Lewis's free kick pierces the defensive wall and rockets past him into the net (more pictures P19)