

GAME OF CHANCE

Second-half goals swing it for Town

By CHILTERN

ALTHOUGH the Town were well on top in the first half of this match against Tranmere Rovers, they had to wait until well into the second half before goals by Lewis and Branston put them firmly on the victory trail.

Conditions on the rain-soaked Kenilworth Road pitch were extremely difficult, and only one Town shot —by Sheffield—found the mark in the first half. This was countered by an awkwardly bouncing equaliser just before the interval.

Heavy rain this morning, even though it eased off towards kick-off time, had a bad effect on the game, which looked like being the lowest of the season.

Many people were doubtful about whether the match would be on and secretary Bob Readhead estimated that he had received in the region of 1,000 phone calls.

The pitch was pretty well waterlogged, which necessitated some forking of the goal areas, but generally there was little surface water.

Both teams were unchanged, and the Town had Billy McDermont as substitute in place of Keith Allen who had the job on Wednesday.

WATER SPURTS

Branston won the toss and chose to kick towards the Oak Road goal, which was much the wetter half of the field—in the preliminary kicking water was spurting up as the players ran over the turf.

First threat came when Lewis chased a long clearance kick by Read and Cumbes dropped the greasy ball but made a quick recovery.

Cumbes had to go full length to save a right-footed drive from Rioch after a characteristic dash.

Rioch was on the mark from the best part of 35 yards, then Lewis picked up another long clearance by Read out on the left and brought Cumbes to his knees at the near post.

Again the Town pressed, and Smith just got his foot to a low cross by Harrison before it could reach Sheffield.

ADVENTUROUS

The Town were by far the more adventurous and ambitious in attack, and little was seen of the Tranmere attack yet.

French made ground cleverly before letting drive from the fringe of the penalty area and his powerful shot was held by Cumbes.

An offside decision deprived the Town of a goal. As the whistle went, Lewis raised the ball into the roof of the net.

Then came a stoppage while Pointon was attended to for injury.

Rain was falling heavily now to make playing conditions even more difficult but

TEAMS

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

TRANMERE ROVERS: Cumbes; Pointon, Robertson; Casey, Smith, King; Rowland, Pritchard, Yardley, Sinclair, McNamee. Substitute: Beamish.

Referee: Mr. H. G. New, Portsmouth.

the Town continued to keep the Tranmere defence busy.

A brilliant move by the Town in which Rioch sent away French came to a premature end when Smith headed out, and finally Harrison was offside.

Then after 21 minutes came the goal the Town so richly deserved when SHEFFIELD came racing up at top speed to meet a centre by Harrison and smacked the ball into the net as he finished full-length in the mud.

DOUGAN EFFORT

The excitement continued following a superb effort by Dougan who kept going after being challenged on three



LAURIE SHEFFIELD put the Town ahead from a Harrison centre after 21 minutes.

separate occasions. Finally, he passed to Lewis, whose shot was a winner all the way until Cumbes just got his fingertips to it and diverted it for a corner.

Now the Tranmere defence was completely at full stretch and Lewis and Harrison both went within inches of increasing the Town's lead.

Again, the Town mounted a heavy raid at the end of which Slough headed into the hands of Cumbes. Then there was a stoppage while Lewis received attention for a leg injury.

Read saw some action when Rowland for once got clear of the attentions of Jardine and made a hard centre which the goalkeeper pulled down well at the near post.

As the rain became heavier than ever, players were beginning to slip and slide all over the place.

DOGGED DEFENCE

Tranmere were still having to concentrate mostly on dogged defence and they were probably fortunate that the weather had made accuracy of finishing a chancy business.

An escape for the Town followed a corner on the left when Rowland let fly from 20 yards and the ball seemed booked for the top corner of the net until Branston jumped and headed it wide.

A bad foul by Casey on Harrison left the winger with a limp and brought the Town a free-kick just inside the Tranmere half, which Moore placed well and Cumbes saved with two fists.

Then French was pulled down just outside the penalty area, and Rioch got his shot from the free-kick through the defensive wall and the mud-plastered Cumbes had to go full length again.

EQUALISER

Then after 39 minutes came a shock for the Town when Tranmere equalised through McNAMEE. The winger's low shot from the wing bounced awkwardly for Read, who in normal circumstances would have saved comfortably enough, and the ball landed in the back of the net.

More pressure at the Tranmere end followed and there was some excitement when Sheffield had a clear shot at goal and the ball stuck in the mud after Cumbes had taken some of the pace off it. However, Robertson was in position to clear.

Then Slough brought Cumbes into action again from 30 yards. Half-time:

LUTON TOWN ... 1
TRANMERE R. 1

Just after the second half started there was a hold-up because a hole seemed to have appeared—though it may merely have been deep mud—midway in the Town half of the field, now at the Oak Road end.

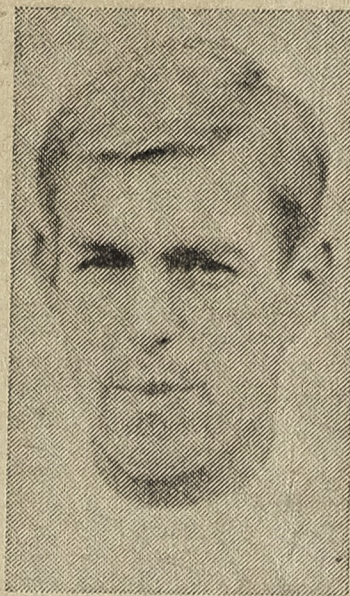
There was a deal of stamping about in the vicinity before the referee let play go on.

The rain had almost stopped but the pitch was in a terrible condition and Read was nearly caught by a long free-kick from Smith which bounced in front of him. It would have been serious if Sinclair, who was very much on the spot, had been able to gain control.

Two corners followed to the Town, from the second of which Branston headed wide, barging over Sheffield in the process.

Tranmere were certainly more in it than they had been for most of the first half, and Read had to go full length in the mud to keep out a shot from Rowland.

The Town attack was in nothing like its form of the



BRIAN LEWIS regained the lead for the Town with an angled shot after an hour.

first half, and the only noteworthy effort was a header from Slough which went too high.

OPPORTUNIST

Then, with the crowd beginning to become restive, the Town regained their lead after exactly an hour with a fine opportunist goal by LEWIS.

It followed a pass by Slough which Rioch, trying to control, fell. He managed to nudge it to the left where Lewis was waiting. Although he was angled, the inside-



TERRY BRANSTON gave the Town their third goal after 65 minutes.

right does not make many mistakes from this sort of position, and he beat Cumbes comfortably.

There was nearly another from Lewis shortly afterwards with a shot from the edge of the penalty area that skidded off the turf at speed to beat Cumbes—and also the far post.

The Dougan placed a free kick high into the goalmouth, and Casey nearly put through his own goal when he headed the ball almost out of Cumbes' hands and it missed the post by inches.

The corner, well-placed by French, led to the Town's third goal after 65 minutes. Sheffield led a rush for the ball which fell loose and BRANSTON was there to belt it into the net.

In a solo effort, Sheffield tried in vain to turn the ball past Cumbes, then French shot wide after boring his way into the middle.

POINT-BLANK

Tranmere were not done with and a mistake by Dougan let in Yardley, and Read saved at point-blank range.

Straight from this, there was a breakaway by Lewis, in which King made a back pass that Cumbes could not reach and presented the Town with a corner.

A chance of making absolutely certain of both points

How the goals came

SHEFFIELD for Luton after 21 minutes
McNAMEE for Tranmere after 39 minutes.
LEWIS for Luton after 60 minutes.
BRANSTON for Luton 65 minutes

fell to Sheffield from a centre by French, but although he met the ball with his head with great deliberation he sent the ball flying wide of the post when a goal looked absolutely certain.

Now the Town had resumed their command of the first half and regained much of their sparkle.

There was a narrow escape for the Town when McNamee shot from point-blank range. Slough's foot caused a deflection which sent the ball just too high.

CRUEL LUCK

The Town had cruel luck in their next attack. Rioch broke clean through, had to shoot as Cumbe advanced, beat the goalkeeper and saw the ball strike the bar.

Back it came to Harrison who was a bit too hurried with his effort and was well wide.

Read did well to advance and fall on a free-kick from McNamee.

Rioch was trying hard for a goal and he forced Cumbe full length in the mud again with another fine drive. Then Sheffield, intervening in an effort to head in, spoilt a chance for Harrison.

Result:

LUTON TOWN 3
TRANMERE R. 1