

POOLS SINK IN LUTON QUAGMIRE

Luton Town 3
Hartlepool 0

68/69

HARTLEPOOL'S front line skidded and slithered to another depressingly ineffective full-stop in the Kenilworth Road quagmire yesterday.

The turnstiles were opened only 10 minutes before the kick-off after 24 hours of non-stop heavy rain had put the game in doubt.

On a pitch that occasionally threw up fountains of water and times made the ball skid off awkward and troublesome angles, Hartlepool set about the formidable task of ending Luton's unbeaten home run.

They failed, but there was credit and heartbreak in this feat.

Hartlepool were robbed of the

opportunity to get back in the game in the 64th minute by a decision that bewildered them and visibly baffled the Luton players.

After Cummings had been held up on the left, Bell met Hepplewhite's chipped free-kick to head well out of Taylor's reach.

The referee brought a sigh of disbelief when, as he told me after the game, he judged that Bell had levered himself off the ground by Branston's shoulders.

Hartlepool, battling with warming courage and winning a clear advantage in the middle, would, I'm sure, have made it an interesting finish if the goal had been allowed to stand.

Luton credited already with a brilliantly-headed goal in the 28th minute from Sheffield, and a second five minutes after the interval through the cultured and deadly right boot of Rioch, were

not to be caught napping again.

Just to show Hartlepool that they hadn't put all their scoring shots on parade, they brought about, for them, an eminently satisfactory conclusion in the 79th minute when Allen dispossessed Sheridan in midfield and sent the nippy Lewis away on the left.

He showed Bircumshaw the ball, whipped by him on the inside and completed the move with a shot that Smith hardly saw.

Rioch's goal, a vicious "screamer," from 20 yards that tore inches inside an upright, was the finest of three great goals.

LUTON TOWN.—Taylor; McDermott, Jardine; Allen, Branston, Slough; French, Lewis, Sheffield, Rioch, Whitaker.

HARTLEPOOL.—Smith; Bircumshaw, Drysdale; Sheridan, Gill, Coad; Young, Bell, Cummings, Wright, Hepplewhite.