

# BATTLE IN MUD

## Branston goal is neutralised

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68/69

**THIRD Division leaders Bournemouth made a valiant bid to dent Luton Town's 100 per cent home record this afternoon in a tough, uncompromising battle on a rain-soaked pitch.**

Defences were tight, but Branston moved up to give the Town an early lead, only to have it neutralised before the interval by a goal by Bumstead.

Last night's heavy rain, followed by more today, had left the pitch thoroughly saturated, and I fancy if there had been a great deal more there would have been some doubt about the match starting. As it was, groundsmen were forking the worst areas — those immediately in front of the main stand, until five minutes before kick-off time, and there was still some glimpse of surface water.

Both goal areas had been liberally sanded, particularly the one at the lower-lying Oak Road end. It looked like the game being a muddy battle.

After his hat-trick last Saturday Keith Allen retained the centre-forward position in place of Sheffield, who became substitute. The Town's other changes were on the left wing, Rioch moving inside for Whittaker's reinstatement at outside-left.

### BOURNEMOUTH CHOICE

After some attempt to throw a smoke screen over his final selection, Bournemouth manager Freddie Cox nominated the 12 who played in the Cup replay on Wednesday, but shuffled his hand a little.

Gater, who was the substitute, wore the No. 6 shirt, Bolton went to No. 11, and it was Peters who sat with the trainers on the bench.

Once again the Town kicked their favourite way, towards the Oak Road goal, but the first raid of any note came from Bournemouth, McDermant having to give away a corner after Dougan sliced the ball.

From this, Gater sent the ball skidding well wide—and skidding was the operative word, because there was obviously plenty of water close to the surface. Despite the un-

superior, and, after Rioch had driven a shot high over the bar, Naylor headed behind a centre from McDermant which was looking very dangerous.

### TOWN LEAD

With Bournemouth forced back into deep defensive positions now—in fact having nine men in their penalty area—there was another rush on their goal following good work by French, but the ball was cleared.

Now, the Town were finding their stride. French was beginning to worry the Bournemouth left flank, and another centre from him was diverted for a corner. And from this, the Town took the lead after 17 minutes through BRANSTON.

Whittaker took the kick, and when it came over Allen was pushed blatantly in the back. It did not matter, however, because Branston was up for the cross and as Jones came out, the centre-half slipped it into the net from a few yards out, to be mobbed by his team mates.

In the last five minutes, the Town had been leading up to this, because they had shaken off their early uncertainty and had begun to achieve cohesion.

### OFFSIDE TRAP

To Bournemouth's attempts to hit back offside was a bogey, and they had not shown much sign as yet of finding the answer to these tactics.

There could have been a penalty to the Town when Allen was pushed in the back, and again the referee showed latitude when Naylor cannoned into the back of Lewis.

French was still tantalising Bournemouth, and from another centre by him Slough headed into the hands of Jones.

A feature had been tough tackling by the tall Bournemouth defenders. Their attack, however, was being kept largely outside the Town's penalty area. By far their best

attempt came from a diving header by East which went just wide of the post.

### LEWIS MARKED

Lewis was being closely marked, but he managed to find room for himself on the left wing, only to shoot wide from 18 yards.

The referee by no means increased his popularity when he allowed an apparent case of handling by Bournemouth to pass.

There was a close call for the Town when Pound suddenly found an open space on the right and hit a low cross that could very easily have finished in the back of the net as Bolton raced in. He got a foot to the ball, but the mud slowed it down and Davie snatched it up.

### THE EQUALISER

Again the Town were beginning to press, and a three-cornered move by Bannister, Lewis and French brought another tussle in front of the visitors goal before finally Jones cleared from Slough.

Seven minutes before half-time, Rioch was injured in a heavy tackle, but was able to resume after attention.

The irony was that Bournemouth were awarded a free-kick immediately after this, and while Rioch was still on the ground Branston protested hard.

As it happened, the free-kick led to the equaliser after 39 minutes. Naylor took it, and the ball was flicked on by East to BUMSTEAD. From an angle, the right-winger hit the ball quickly and hard, and for a second it looked as if it was going over the bar. Davie tried to reach it under the bar, but it seemed to dip at the last moment and it landed in the far corner of the net.

Immediately afterwards there was a chance for the Town to regain their lead as Allen went racing through, but he was thwarted by Jones's quick advance.

Almost on the stroke of half-time, Bournemouth worked the ball confidently with the Town defence backpedalling, and it was as well that Slough was in the line of flight of a hard drive by Hold. Bournemouth won a corner out of it which Bannister headed clear, but the ball remained at the Town end for some moments before Slough finally cleared. Half-time.

### LUTON TOWN ... 1 BOURNEMOUTH 1

First incident of the second half was a move down the Bournemouth left which left Hold in a challenging position until Branston conceded a corner. Whittaker made only a half-clearance, but luckily for the Town, Gater hit his shot wide.

Bournemouth were threatening to take a grip. They forced two more corners in quick succession before Pound drove narrowly over, with Davie clutching at thin air.

The Town looked like regaining their lead when Lewis, with one of his mercurial dashes, worked his way through to within eight yards from goal. He was on the point of making his shot when his legs were whipped from under him. It looked like a penalty, but the referee waved aside all appeals, to the accompaniment of loud stamping from the stand. Before play could be resumed, Lewis and Naylor had to be given attention, and there was quite a long hold-up.

### COMPLAINT

During it, Bournemouth manager Freddie Cox and substitute Peters, who were on the players' bench, complained to linesmen that something had been thrown at them, and produced a small item that looked like a sweet.

At last play was on again with Lewis hobbling painfully. The Town maintained their pressure, however, and French was brought down by Miller. This brought a surge on the Bournemouth goal. Jones was bowled over, but the ball was booted clear.

There was some sign that matters were tending to get out of hand, and there was certainly some tough tackling.

With ten minutes of the second half gone, Naylor, who was still limping heavily, went off and Peters sent on as the substitute.

### MARKED MAN

Lewis was very much a marked man, and almost every time he secured possession of the ball he received attention of some sort or another. From a free-kick for another foul on him, French placed the ball cleverly into the goal area, but everybody in front of goal, including Branston, missed it.

Then came an astonishing series of mistakes at the Town end, and Pound left Davie helpless with a shot that

## How the goals came

**BRANSTON for Luton after 17 minutes.  
BUMSTEAD for Bournemouth after 39 minutes.**

struck the bar and bounced back into play.

Twice, the ball was driven back at the Town goal, until finally Davie retrieved the situation with a fine diving save from Bumstead.

### IRRITATING

Bournemouth were irritating the crowd with the time they were taking over free kicks, and the referee pointed to his watch to indicate that they were not getting away with time-wasting.

The toll of injuries was mounting. Hold was hurt when fouled by Rioch, and there was a hold-up before Hold limped back into action. The Town were now showing some queasiness under pressure, and were nearly in trouble again when a back pass from Dougan was intercepted by Peters. Finally the ball was scrambled away, as it was again when Evans was left with an almost open goal soon afterwards.

The better scoring opportunities were falling to Bournemouth, but fortunately for the Town they were not taking the most of them.

### OFFSIDE

The Town badly needed a goal, and there were visions of one when Allen headed the ball on to Lewis, but he was off-side.

A free-kick for yet another foul on Lewis was driven somewhat unexpectedly at goal by Whittaker, and Jones plucked the ball from under the bar.

The Town were moving better now, and a centre by French was punched away by Jones as Allen challenged.

French was then pulled down by Peters, and from the free-kick Rioch worked himself into a shooting position only to send the ball a couple of feet wide of the post.

### SHEFFIELD ON

A quarter of an hour from the end, the Town brought on Sheffield for Whittaker.

In breakaways, Bournemouth were still extremely dangerous, and Pound was again left with a clear run for goal which made him look a fairly certain scorer but he tried to hook the ball over Davie's head, and the goalkeeper was fully prepared.

Result:

**LUTON TOWN ... 1  
BOURNEMOUTH 1**