

# MINUTE LEAD AT BOUNDARY PARK

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68/69

DESPITE giving away a stupid goal in the first minute, Oldham showed the Town that they weren't playing quite as badly as their league position would suggest and went close to scoring on one or two occasions.

Luton also did some useful attacking and a number of long range shots tested Gordine who looked suspect in the air. But the Town had to be content with a one-goal lead at half-time.

As expected, manager Alec Stock, no doubt worried about the lack of penetration shown by the attack on Wednesday, brought in Laurie Sheffield.

This meant Brian Lewis reverted to substitute, the club's leading scorer, who was left out for the first time since he came from Coventry City. Otherwise the Town were unchanged and Oldham, who have struck a successful spell recently, gaining six points out of the last eight, made no alterations.

It was a bitterly cold afternoon with a strong wind making matters worse, but on the credit side there was no rain or snow and the pitch was in very good condition.

## SENSATION

There was a sensational start with the Town taking the lead immediately the game was on and certainly less than a minute after the start. Branston won the toss to give the Town the advantage of the wind and from the kick-off a real mix up in the Oldham defence led to Luton going ahead.

Hunter began the trouble with a back-header to LAWSON, who in turn headed the ball back to Gordine. The goalkeeper, challenged by Jardine, held the ball but fell back over the goal-line with it.

Oldham began to fight back without making a great deal of progress and the Town were looking the more dangerous, probably due to some poor clearances by Gordine.

There was one dangerous situation in front of the Town goalmouth following a co-ordinated movement at the end of which Davie dropped the ball when challenged by Bebbington, but the whistle

had gone for a foul on the goalkeeper.

## UNMARKED

There could have been another goal for the Town when Allen swung out a beautiful pass to French. Sheffield, unmarked, looked offside and probably he thought so too because he made only a casual sort of header from the centre which went straight to Gordine.

At this stage good use was being made of French with Keen in closer support than he has been in previous matches.

When Oldham came back again Bannister and Moore between them got the defence into a tangle so that finally Branston had to head behind to prevent a centre from Chapman from developing into anything serious.

Having thrown off this assault the Town came back strongly to gain a free-kick when Sheffield was fouled, and Slough's attempt at goal from over 20 yards was blocked.

There was a narrow escape for the Town when Bebbington from the right-wing pushed through a shrewd pass which Spence was in the process of teeing up for a point blank shot when Branston raced in to concede a corner.

Oldham's forwards were looking quite fast and snappy in approach but there had been little sign of finishing power so far.

## PRESSURE

Under pressure the Oldham defence was looking none too happy and in fact there were some periods of panic and attempts at hasty clearances.

There was not much in it and with Oldham continuing to work the ball well in approach, they were a bit unlucky when a shot from

Bebbington just missed the far post.

There was uncertainty, too, in the Town defence when Chapman lifted the ball over but finally Davie got hold of it and from it the Town swung away again.

Unselfishly, Sheffield, who had his back to the goal, pushed the ball to Slough and he hit it first time and Gordine had some difficulty catching it.

## VIOLENT

Davie was soon in violent action, spectacularly reaching a shot from Blore.

Similarly, Gordine, who is small for a goalkeeper, had difficulty in pushing over a shot from Sheffield made on the half turn.

Again Gordine was in trouble through his lack of height when the ball came over from French, giving Town another corner on the left.

This Allen took, but the ball, perhaps helped by the wind, went behind.

A foul by Dougan on Chapman enabled Oldham to get back on the attack again and in the end Davie, coming out to challenge Blore, got the ball away somewhat sketchily after it had bounced badly for him.

## SWINGING

Play was swinging from end to end now and Sheffield from the left tested Gordine who was immediately in action again, tipping over a strong drive from 25 yards by Allen.

Quite rightly the Town were shooting at every opportunity, trying to cash in on Gordine's vulnerability in the air, but the goalkeeper looked eminently safe in dealing with an attempt by Sheffield.

## SLACKNESS

There was still little in it with neither team enjoying domination for any length of time, but Oldham could

## TEAMS

OLDHAM ATHLETIC: Gordine; Blair, Wood, Hunter, Lawson, Joyce; Colquhoun, Spence, Blore, Bebbington, Chapman. Substitute: Bowie.

LUTON TOWN: Davie; Dougan, Bannister; Slough, Branston, Moore; French, Keen, Sheffield, Allen, Jardine. Substitute: Lewis.

Referee: D. Turner, of Rugeley.

have been on terms, and perhaps should have been, when Bebbington was left with a chance following slack covering.

He was angled, but pulled his shot wide of the far post where it was missed by Spence.

There came an opening at the other end when, with Oldham looking for an offside decision that never came, Sheffield could not quite reach a centre from French which had it been a few inches lower must have meant a goal.

Quite the best effort for Oldham came when Hunter embarked on a long run up-field before shooting left-footed and the ball just missed the angle of the woodwork with Davie desperately trying to reach it.

Slough, who was much in evidence in the attack, trying to force home the Town's narrow advantage while they had the wind in their favour, was unlucky with an attempt that beat Gordine but hit the top of the bar and went over.

With half-time near Oldham made some frantic efforts to draw level, but all Davie had to contend with was a lob by Bebbington. Half-time:

OLDHAM ATH. .... 0  
LUTON TOWN ..... 1

It now remained to see how the Town could cope with the handicap of playing against the wind and whether their single goal lead would be sufficient.

From the start of the second half Oldham went onto the attack and it was evident that Davie was going to have as much trouble in getting length on clearance kicks as Gordine. In fact his first attempt carried only three-quarters of the way to the halfway line.

When the Town tried to make ground Allen was roughly brought down by Lawson, but nothing came of the free kick.

## TROUBLE

Trouble for the Town came when Moore, trying to hold off Blore to allow a through pass to run for a goal kick, was pulled up for obstruction just inside the penalty area. The indirect free kick was taken by Bebbington who pulled it back to Hunter who had two attempts blocked.

A quick break down the left by Allen looked promising for the Town and his centre came across accurately enough though a little behind Jardine whose attempt to make contact with his head failed. Then French was injured and carried on with a pronounced limp on his right leg.

It looked to me as if he had slipped and suffered a strain. At all events there was no immediate thought of bringing on the substitute.

A long free-kick by Blair brought a header by Spence that sent the ball skidding just wide of the post.

And then French aggravated his injury and earned an admonishing wave from the referee for a foul on Wood.

Offside had been a trouble to Oldham but it nearly let the Town down when Blair used the square pass, the referee waved on play and Davie had to come outside his penalty area to kick away from Spence.

Now the Town were relying increasingly on their facility

for coming out of defence quickly and thus drawing the Oldham forwards offside.

Then it was seen that Davie was in some trouble, obviously having hurt himself in racing to clear and there was stoppage while he had attention.

Happily the trouble was not serious and French too was looking more mobile now.

Now it was mostly a battle between the Oldham forwards and the Town defence with the latter having weathered the first quarter hour without undue difficulty.

A free kick enabled them to relieve the pressure and

## How the goals came

LAWSON (own goal) for Luton after one minute.

there was some neat inter-passing by French and Allen before French was fouled.

For all their pressure Oldham were not looking dangerous with the Town defence filling in the gaps quickly and giving them little chance to shoot.

When the Town got away the linesman stood with flag upheld for an offside decision against Sheffield but was ignored by the referee.

Again the linesman raised his flag in vain for offside against Allen who was barely in the Oldham half.

## SUPPORT

Then the linesman did find some support from the referee when Sheffield was fouled by Lawson and the free-kick had the effect of giving some respite for the defence. There was a mis-kick by Lawson, who, however, recovered too quickly for Sheffield to take advantage of it.

Oldham were now tending to make one pass too many in front of goal which was proving fatal in the face of quick tackling.

At this stage, Athletic were reduced to shooting somewhat hopefully from long range and an effort by Wood sailed too high.

It was still mainly a defensive battle the Town were fighting and Slough was forced to give away a corner which suffered a similar fate to a couple of those by Allen in the first half—the wind swirling the ball over the bar.

## SUBSTITUTE

With 20 minutes left French, who was still feeling the effects of his injury, was called off and Lewis went in at outside-right.

After a scrappy period, Oldham made a sudden swoop in which Joyce took a first-time swing at the ball and Davie, at full-length, turned it round a post.

Corners, however, were not availing Oldham much and they certainly had not made the most of their chances.

Davie was showing good judgment in leaving his goal as Oldham began to plug long balls up the middle and then the Town came into it more decisively when Bannister made a long run before passing to Jardine, whose shot from the edge of the penalty area was much too high.

Obviously, Oldham were becoming desperate now as their pressure failed to yield them a goal but there was one scare at the Town end when Branston slipped when trying to clear and Dougan had to put the ball hastily behind.