

Town get point and might well have had two

By CHILTERN
READING 1, LUTON TOWN 1

68/69

WITH a hard-earned, well-deserved point from Reading last night, the Town kept in touch with the promotion race and showed the determination and willingness to fight which has characterised their recent away displays.

This was despite the fact that they were without the strong man of the defence, Branston, for whom Slough proved a capable deputy. McDermont, coming in as the midfield replacement, did very well. It was a grueling struggle in the mud before a crowd of 5,973, in which defences largely had the better of matters, but the Town were never afraid to go out to attack, and of their front line French and Sheffield were the most dangerous.

In fact, Sheffield came along with another vital goal to revive the Town immediately after they had been shaken by going into arrears early in the second half.

LEADING POSITIONS

	P	W	D	L	F	A	P
Watford	33	19	9	5	53	20	47
Swindon Tn	34	20	7	7	53	27	47
Luton	32	18	5	9	48	27	41

After a morning of doubts, the referee passed the pitch as fit about 3.30 p.m. but in the last half an hour before kick-off time there was more heavy rain. In fact, the ground gave every sign of being a muddy morass, and there was the added threat of fog. All in all it added up to most uncomfortable conditions.

To start with at any rate the Town were playing a 4-2-4 formation with McDermont and Allen as the midfield men. From the start the Town took up the running and from the second of two corners in quick succession Bannister hit a first-time drive that rebounded off the legs of Spiers.

Reading hit back and there was a narrow escape when Davie threw himself feet first at a drive by Collins, and the ball went out to Lockerty, who hesitated and lost a reasonable chance.

RIGHT TACTICS

Davie was in action again fielding a long shot from Yard, and then had a much more difficult task in just tipping over the bar a rising drive by Sainty. Reading were shooting whenever the chance presented, good tactics in this sort of going.

It was noticeable that Jardine was often slotting back to make a third in midfield, especially when Reading were on the attack, as they were increasingly.

Although the fog did not seem to be getting worse, play was difficult to follow on the far side of the field.

It was up-and-down stuff, with the Town doing their share in attack, and Jardine running on to a pass by Lewis saw his shot deflected for a corner.

For a spell, the Town were on top with Reading's defence twice being fully extended by probing runs by French, but the main work for Brown was in dealing with corners of which the Town were having

for some time came when play swung to the other end with Sheffield sending away French with a well-timed header. The winger forced Brown to a difficult save.

FINE SAVE

Then Reading had a turn and Thornhill came near to giving them the vital first goal with a shot brilliantly taken on the turn. Fortunately Davie just got a hand to it and the ball seemed to clip the top of the bar before going behind.

Momentarily the Town had lost their domination and there was a rare old scrummage in front of their goal following a corner by Docherty before the ball eventually reached safety.

Almost on the stroke of the interval the referee had a word with Dougan, who had been playing splendidly, for a foul on Harris.

Half-time:

READING 0
LUTON TOWN 0

It had been a pretty good first half for the Town who had shown great determination and fighting spirit, particularly in defence.

Although rain was falling steadily, there was still a fog haze hanging over the ground, but fortunately it was not worsening. On the other hand, the going was, and it made accurate football something of a chancy business.

First raid of note came from Reading when Sainty pushed the ball through to Silvester, who took it on a little too far and Davie was able to come out and clear.

LEWIS FOULED

French, who had been very much in the picture, set the Luton fans roaring with a fantastic run during the course of which he beat four tackles before forcing Brown to pull the ball down from under the bar.

With Reading fighting back, Davie was called upon twice in quick succession, but the Town moved forward again and Lewis had his feet cut from under him by Spiers.

There was a minor scare for Reading when Brown dropped Bannister's free kick, but he was on the ball in a trice to complete the clearance.

QUICK GOALS

With 63 minutes gone there came a shock for the Town when Reading took the lead through SILVESTER. It followed a long lob into the penalty area by Bacuzzi, which was misheaded by a defender—I could not tell for certain whom because of the fog—and in the end Silvester ran the ball into the corner of the net.

Reading's joy was shortlived because a minute later the Town were on level terms again from SHEFFIELD. It was Allen who set the goal up with a terrific drive from just outside the penalty area to which Brown dived but could not retain possession. The ball ran loose and Sheffield, following up, made no mistake about accepting the chance at close range.

The excitement continued and Sheffield had a shot kicked off the line by Meldrum, with Brown hopelessly placed.

Although Reading were not

done by any means, there was no doubt that the Town were the more purposeful team. In fact, they were turning defence into attack more readily than were Reading, and there was another electrifying run by French which brought a corner, with which Brown dealt competently.

In almost the last minute, Dougan came to the Town's rescue when Sainty looked a possible scorer and there was another tense situation from a header following a corner. Reading threw everything in to attack.

READING: Brown; Bacuzzi, Meldrum; Yard, Spiers, Thornhill; Docherty, Sainty, Silvester, Collins, Harris. Substitute: Chapman.

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

Referee: H. G. New, Portsmouth.

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