

TOWN MISS VITAL POINT

By CHILTERN
LUTON TOWN 6, SOUTHPORT 0

IT was not for the lack of effort or application that the Town failed to score in the vital match with Southport at Kenilworth Road last night. However, the loss of a point, only their third at home this season, was seriously damaging to their promotion chances, which, with only three points coming out of the last eight, are now taking on the appearance of a long-shot.

A crowd of 15,693 saw the Town pressing relentlessly for much of the match, but being unable to find a way through Southport's blanket defence.

Crowning blow for the Town was the loss of their goalkeeper, Sandy Davie, who was carried off injured 11 minutes from the end.

Certainly the Town were desperately out of luck from all points of view, but credit must be given to Southport's defence.

In addition to being without Bannister, still suffering from gastric trouble, the Town lacked the services of Allen, but were in the fortunate position of being able to bring back Branston after absence through injury.

Even though Southport were obviously going to follow the popular fashion of deep defensive tactics the Town were prominent early on and Keen headed wide from a centre by French.

Then Slough, being given more freedom after being restored to the right-half position, caused Reeves to scamper across his goal as the ball went just wide of a post.

Quite the best effort came at the end of a persistent run by Jardine, who brought Reeves to his knees at the near post to deal with a hard drive.

Then Lewis tried to head a spectacular goal by throwing himself headlong at a centre made from the right by Rioch, but at such a pace was the ball travelling that the inside-right could only glance it wide.

Southport were managing to break out, not with a great deal of threat until Moore conceded a free kick for a foul just outside the penalty area. From this, Peat, right up in front of goal, missed his kick completely, otherwise the Town might have been in dire trouble.

FELLED

When the Town came back again, Slough raced into the penalty area where he was tackled by Russell (M) and went down. The referee considered the tackle fair, but Slough was hurt and had to have attention.

Numbers were meaning little as far as Southport were concerned because Curwen, wearing three, had settled in at right-back, the number seven, Russell, was in a deep defensive role and Redrobe, 11, was occupying the place approximating to right-half. Strangely, one of the two strikers was the right-back, Alтей. Just what all this was supposed to add up to was a trifle baffling.

Another Town casualty was Jardine, who damaged his right ankle in a tackle and resumed limping.

A long free kick by Moore was cleared to French whose first-time kick was yards too high.

Although the Town were having much more of the play they were not being able to penetrate the deep defensive plan of Southport and the forwards were finding themselves closely marked.

Between them, Alтей and Andrews caused some concern at the Luton end before Jardine, who was doing well, relieved the situation by passing back to Davie.

With the Town pressure increasing, Reeves, harassed by Slough when Harrison lifted the ball into the goalmouth, had to give away a corner. Then Rioch, left with an open goal after a ricochet, was pulled up for off-side, only eight yards out.

Southport were certainly contriving to leave few gaps, either in mid-field or at close quarters and the Town were rarely getting a clear shot at goal.

At the same time, Southport break-aways were becoming less frequent, and in one of them Redrobe was reduced to making a hopeful shot from fully 35 yards.

This was merely an interlude in the Town pressure and a mistake in defence nearly cost Southport a goal, but in the end Reeves just managed to snatch the ball away from Harrison.

Certainly the pattern of the game had not brought many thrills for another large crowd, but there was a chance for the Town on the half-hour when Reeves was penalised for carrying the ball too far.

This brought the Town a free-kick just inside the penalty area and after some difficulty in getting Southport to stand ten yards away, Slough drove the ball at the defensive wall and it flew wide. It looked a corner, but the referee's verdict was a goal-kick.

Slough stood and appealed for a penalty when he was pulled of the ball.

The referee, however, would have no truck with it, and Slough might have been better advised to carry on playing.

It was still pretty one-sided with Southport content to defend and the Town still trying to work out the answer to the problem.

A long free-kick by Dougan looked promising and Lewis did well to reach it with his head only to see the ball slough wide.

Slough and Keen were now able to give almost undivided attention to attack and the former was desperately unlucky when he slipped into the penalty area, unmarked for once, and his shot was so close that it landed the ball on the top of the net.

LAI D SIEGE

There now began a terrific siege on the Southport goal, during which Reeves was hard pressed to push away a free kick by Dougan, and Rioch had a fierce drive deflected for a corner.

This French placed well, and Branston headed only inches too high. Again Branston came up into the attack to make an almost identical header, with the ball going the wrong side of the bar and bouncing on the top of the net.

Then back in his defensive position Branston received a kick in the face as he challenged Alтей, who was penalised. After a brief examination by the trainer the centre-half played on.

Then suddenly when Southport attacked in some strength it needed coolness by Branston, who gave away a corner, to get the Town out of trouble.

Meanwhile Jardine had received another knock on his right ankle which necessitated further treatment.

That sortie apart, it continued to be nearly all Luton, who however, still could not find a way through.

On the stroke of half-time Lewis appeared to miss a close-range chance, but the whistle had already gone for off-side.

Immediately after that Davie saved a dangerous situation by scooping the ball away from Field's feet after a sharp raid. Half-time;

LUTON TOWN	...	0
SOUTHPORT	...	0

During the interval, a fire broke out in the corner of the Kenilworth Road terrace, but was quickly put out.

Jardine, who had twice been injured, did not appear for the second half and Buxton became the second striker with Rioch.

Lewis moved to left-back, not that there was generally anyone to mark, and he was likely to be given freedom to attack.

In the first minute there was a sudden surge by Southport and Alex Russell was unlucky with a shot that just topped the bar.

TEAMS

LUTON TOWN: Davie; Dougan, Jardine; Slough, Branston, Moore; French, Lewis, Rioch, Keen, Harrison. Substitute, Buxton.

SOUTHPORT: Reeves; Alтей, Curwen; Peat, Aindon, Clarke; Russell (M), Field, Andrews, Russell (A), Redrobe. Substitute, Groves.

Referee: P. Walters, Bridgwater.

Goals were still an elusive quantity for the Town, although Rioch, shooting right-footed was not far off the mark.

PRESSURE

Buxton, anxious to re-establish himself, won a corner that Branston reached with his head, but someone in the goalmouth scramble hooked the ball off the line.

Then Rioch was again prominent, nearly harassing Aindon into putting through his own goal. As it was, the Town had to be content with another corner, which Reeves punched clear.

Slough was fouled near the touchline and French's free kick brought a terrific rush on the Southport goal without anyone being able to make contact.

When they did break out, Southport were quite dangerous and a shot by Curwen threatened to spring out of the hands of Davie, who, however, made a quick recovery.

There was a chance for the Town when Rioch was allowed to go on from a palpably off-side position, but Aindon made a last-ditch dive to put the ball behind and Branston's header from the corner was cleared.

With the second half half-way through, the Town were becoming almost frantic in their efforts to score, but this massed defence was showing no sign of cracking.

At times the pressure was intense.

Another free-kick to the Town brought a terrific melee which ended with Buxton trying an overhead shot and sending the ball too high.

Some good work by French set up another raid in which Lewis joined, but after a good build up Keen headed the ball the wrong way.

Then Keen found the ball swept away from his feet as it crossed him just inside the penalty area.

Then, amid great excitement, Rioch embarked on a typical run which made him look a likely scorer until two defenders converged on him, bringing him down heavily.

Several of the referee's decisions were not to the Town's liking, and certainly they were peeved when the Rioch incident failed to result in a free-kick and, later, when Andrews was allowed to go on after pushing Dougan over.

CLOSE CALL

There was a close call at the Town end when Andrews slipped past Branston, leaving himself a clear run to goal at an angle.

Bravely Davie came out to dive at the feet of the centre-forward and the ball cannoned out of play off his body. Both players were injured and there was a hold-up while they were attended to.

Of the two Davie was the more seriously injured and after a hold-up he was carried off the pitch and Lewis took over the goalkeeper's jersey.

Eventually a stretcher was procured for Davie, who looked to be in pretty poor shape.

Lewis was soon in action, making a full-length save from Field, and Southport, with their numerical advantage, had turned to attack.

Again Lewis saved confidently from the corner.