

HARD EARNED POINT FOR LUTON TOWN

SOUTHPORT 1, LUTON TOWN 1 68/69

In a ding-dong struggle on a quagmire pitch at Southport last night Luton Town made a brave bid for the two points they badly needed to give their promotion hopes a boost.

Initially they made a good job holding Southport against a strong wind in the first half, and then turned on the heat, going out into attack after the interval.

A goal by Brian Lewis ten minutes after half-time looked as if it would set the pattern for the remainder of the game, but the lead lasted a mere five minutes before Southport equalised direct from a corner.

It was a valiant effort by the Town and in normal circumstances the acquisition of one point from this ground would be considered highly satisfactory. As things are at the moment it may turn out to be not enough.

Terry Branston made a complete recovery from the ankle trouble he received on Saturday, and the Town fielded the team that beat Brighton. They took 13 players, making McDerment substitute, and Potter was the odd man out.

It was a dreadful evening, rain falling heavily, to soak the pitch, and there was also a strong end-to-end wind which the Town were set to face.

There was a lively start with French having a shot deflected too high and Read was twice in action dealing with centres from Alty.

From the opening exchanges it looked as if the Town were going all out for the two points that were absolutely vital to them, and there was no question of falling back on a negative policy.

Conditions were difficult, with the ball shooting off the greasy surface. Otherwise there might have been an early goal for Southport when Alex Russell closed in on a centre from Alty, but the speed of the ball off the pitch beat him.

A bad clearance by Read looked serious for the Town until they were reprieved when Andrews got himself off-side, but with Southport more attack minded than they were at Luton last week, there was further work for the Town defence.

MISKICK

The wind was quite a factor in Southport's favour, and as they continued to have the better of matters Dougan was injured, but made a quick recovery.

When the Town made ground, a miskick by Aindow let in Lewis, who, however, was at an acute angle, and Reeves saved. From the clearance, Southport made ground, and Bannister came across decisively to stop Andrews, and end some hesitation in defence.

With Branston providing the driving force, the Town swung back to the attack, and a firm centre by French was headed clear by Malcolm Russell.

Southport were still the more menacing, and Read went full length to push out a centre from Alty, and the ball ran loose rather dangerously until Keen cleared.

Without really looking potential goalscorers, Southport were still having more of the play, but just how much this was due to the wind was difficult to estimate. At all events, the Town had been forced back into defensive positions, leaving Buxton and Lewis upfield.

FREE KICK

Somewhat hopeful appeals by Southport for a penalty when Field went full length after a tackle by Keen were turned down, and then with Southport striving to get in front while the elements were with them, Clarke came right through to make a drive that was no more than a couple of feet wide, with Read full length.

There was heavy work for the Town defence just at this stage, and Read parried a shot from Field. Little was being seen of the Town attack.

Southport were always busy, moving the ball about briskly,

THE TEAMS

SOUTHPORT: Reeves; Curwen, Clarke; Peat, Russell (M), Aindow; Alty, Field, Andrews, Russell (A), Redrobe. Substitute: Pearson.

LUTON TOWN: Read; Dougan, Bannister; Slough, Branston, Moore; French, Lewis, Buxton, Keen, Rioch. Substitute: McDerment. **REFEREE:** Mr. R. Barker, of Crewe.

and they had a free-kick ten yards or so outside the penalty area when Branston brought down Redrobe, who was spending a lot of time in the middle.

Alty took it, and let go a terrific drive that Read saved brilliantly at full length. In vain as it happened, because the referee ordered it to be re-taken, and this time a couple of Southport forwards got themselves offside.

UNLUCKY

Another free kick took Southport on to the attack again, but the Town were leaving few gaps at close



BRIAN LEWIS

He scored for Town in the 55th minute.

quarters, and persistent though Southport were, they were not really creating clear-cut openings.

When the Town made a sortie, Buxton was a bit unlucky in front of the goal and then French wasted an opportunity by putting the ball well wide.

Almost on the stroke of half time there was a possible chance for Southport when Field picked up a rebound in a favourable position, but his centre was far too strong to be of any value. Half time:

SOUTHPORT ... 0
LUTON TOWN ... 0

With the wind in their favour, it seemed to have eased a little, the Town began with attacking intent and Lewis and Rioch seemed to have switched places.

After a few minutes, Lewis was back in his striking position again, and it was now the Town who were doing the pressing.

French made a determined effort to break through into the penalty area, before being firmly tackled, and then there was a free kick on the left touchline when Andrews fouled Lewis.

This was half cleared, and then Bannister, seeking to do the overlap with which he was so successful on Saturday, was caught offside.

Then in the 55th minute came the break that Town had been looking for when

they took the lead in a snap raid. French began it with a neatly made centre that found LEWIS confronted only by Reeves, and he made no mistake, heading the ball well clear of the goalkeeper into the corner of the net.

CORNER

There was an immediate response from Southport, but Branston and Lewis relieved some anxiety, but only at the cost of a corner.

Southport were hitting back hard, and Redrobe, who was appearing all over the place, smashed a drive just too high after a faulty clearance by Bannister.

Then, exactly on the hour, the Town's slender lead disappeared in somewhat unfortunate circumstances. There was a tussle between Bannister and Alex RUSSELL, which lead to the award of a corner, though it seemed clear that the final touch had been made by the Southport player.

There was an appeal by Bannister, to no avail, and then amazingly Russell with his left foot produced a huge inswinger and scored direct from the corner, with the ball getting in between Read and the near post.

That, of course, put the Town back to square one, and they came out urgently without getting much change in search of another goal, from the Southport defence.

Back came the Town on to the attack, to gain a corner which French placed rather badly, so that all that followed was a goal kick, but the Town came back again through Lewis sending away Rioch, who was finally tackled by Curwen near the corner flag.

Reeves was not all that certain with his goal kicking, and Keen stabbed the ball back immediately, and it was fortunately for Southport that he was just off target.

REBOUND

Now Rioch was being given more freedom of action in the middle of the field, which was a good move because the Town needed his shooting power.

When Southport came back again, Dougan made a timely clearance but the pressure continued for a spell, until the ball was pushed back to Read, who booted it upfield, and the Town had the bad luck to have a goal disallowed.

The chance was laid on by Buxton for Rioch, who had a simple task to run the ball over the line, but the linesman's decision went against him, and Southport had a free kick for offside.

As the game entered its final phase the Town threw everything into the attack in search of the winning goal, and it was Southport who were now hanging on.

Branston went right up for a long free kick by Bannister without being quite able to make contact.

SWUNG BACK

Then Southport, seeming to find some extra strength from somewhere, swung back to the attack again, and Branston had to head over his own bar a centre by Aindow, as Redrobe crashed into him.

There was a ticklish situation from the corner, in which Alex Russell tried a shot from inside the penalty area, but Andrews was caught offside.

In almost the last minute the Town had a narrow escape when Andrews got clear, and his point-blank shot struck Read as he fell.

Attendance: 3,392.