

On target Collins a goal spree

By ERIC PUGH

WITH both teams committed to chasing maximum points, this afternoon's match at Kenilworth Road between the Town and Bristol Rovers, just one point behind in the League before the start, had all the makings of a good top-of-the-table clash.

And with new signings Matt Tees and Chris Nicholl, early prominent, the Town made an impressive start, minimising the danger from some enterprising Rovers' mid-field work, and taking an early lead.

John Collins was the scorer, albeit from a controversial move. But the goal seemed to take the sting from the Bristol Rovers attack, particularly in their finishing, after some promising build-ups in mid-field.

'IN SWIM'

As was expected, the Town's substitute was Brian Lewis, and not Sandy Davie, who in the words of manager Alec Stock had been included in the 13, "to keep him in the swim."

This marked the home debuts of the two newcomers at an aggregate cost of £55,000: Matt Tees, from Charlton, and Chris Nichol, from Halifax Town.

There was a bigish crowd to welcome them, though not quite so large as might have been expected.

All stand tickets available for sale at the office were disposed of three-quarters of an hour before the kick-off.

Rovers, who like the Town are unbeaten in League matches, were unchanged, and they had come according to their manager Bill Dodgin with the aim of gaining two points.

Before the start there was a warning to spectators that forged £5 notes had been passed in the Bury Park area this afternoon.

Mike Keen won the toss and chose to attack the Town's favourite end — Oak Road.

There could have been a shock in the first minute because Graydon laid on a fine chance for Stubbs, who was on the goal side of Nicholl, but meeting the ball on the volley the centre-forward sent it tamely wide.

There was a quick response for the Town with Tees being stopped a couple of times by Taylor, and then the referee had a word with Roberts

after a late tackle on French which sent the winger sprawling.

CHANCE

First scoring attempt for the Town came from MacDonald, who headed a cross by Allen into Sheppard's hands, following a throw-in near the corner flag.

Certainly Rovers with their wingers prominent had looked a lively attacking force in the



John Collins, whose controversial goal after 12 minutes gave the Town an early lead this afternoon.

early minutes, even though Read had not been brought into action.

A couple of forthright clearances by Nicholl, drove them off and then Graydon showed his versatility by suddenly appearing in his own penalty area to beat French to a pass from Slough.

Slowly the Town had been becoming more dangerous and in the 12th minute they took the lead.

It was a controversial goal, because there were strident appeals by Rovers against its award. COLLINS was the scorer, and his success was the reward for persistence when he chased a long through-pass by Allen.

He got round Parsons and as Sheppard came out, steered the ball towards goal.

Rovers claimed that Parsons

could have overtaken the slowly-rolling ball had not Collins pulled him back by his shirt. However, they received no backing from the linesman closest to the incident, nor from the referee.

Rovers obviously were pretty peeved and soon had Read in action a couple of times.

Sheppard at the other end was tested more seriously when Collins, playing more as an orthodox winger on this occasion, came tearing in to throw himself at a centre by French and head the ball so hard that the goalkeeper had difficulty in stopping it.

With the Town keeping it up, French was brought down from behind by Graydon, and from the free-kick Parsons headed over, with Tees threatening.

Rovers began to settle down again and Jarman saw a shot rise too high with Read at full stretch.

A clever intervention by Bannister caused the next Rovers' raid to break down, but generally defences were beginning to take a grip.

More action at the Rovers' end followed brilliant work by French, who outpaced Roberts and flung across a centre to which Sheppard had to throw himself full length.

Now the Town were making some room for themselves in mid-field, and when Keen flashed the ball through to Collins the winger could not quite get sufficient pace behind his shot to trouble Sheppard.

There was a close call for Rovers when Allen swung at a pass from MacDonald, and the ball, which seemed to have been deflected, passed no more than a foot wide. The Town looked for a corner which, however, was not forthcoming.

A foul by Keen on Marsland gave Rovers a free kick which produced a scuffle in front of goal, and Read was fortunate to find Jarman's close-range shot going straight at him.

Both teams were producing some good football in approach, without really managing to find finishing power consistently.

READ HURT

Read was injured when he went down to across from the right and Jarman almost literally kicked the ball out of his

broke through brilliantly, only for his shot to be blocked. Allen picked up the rebound and Sheppard saved under the bar.

Rovers' defence looked harassed and they were lucky when a header from French bounced in front of Sheppard, who could only divert the ball, unfortunately for the Town, too far for the oncoming Tees.

Good play by French and Allen led to the Town attacking again with MacDonald pushing the ball through a little too strongly for Tees, whose chances so far had been limited.

Rovers defence was being given the run around.

Their troubles were increased when Munro tripped Allen, and the free-kick led to the Town's second goal after 55 minutes. Allen secured the ball from the free-kick and hit it low across the goal.

Tees met it first time only for Sheppard to push it out. Fortunately it went straight back to TEES who this time made no mistake with a firm header.

THREE UP

A minute later the Town were three up with MacDonald continuing his remarkable run of consistency.

This time the raid began on the left with Keen pushing the ball to French, whose perfect centre was headed spectacularly high into the net by the eager MacDonald.

There was no disputing the fact that the Town deserved reward of this kind because they had really turned on the pressure with some brilliant attacking football since the interval.

Nor did they let up, and the Rovers' defence continued to be in distinct trouble.

It was all Luton, and Tees, much more in the game in this half, was unlucky with a header that passed inches too high following a centre by Collins

There was almost no relief for the overworked Rovers' defence who conceded two corners in quick succession and there was now scarcely any sign of their attack.

Again the Rovers were in trouble when Tees beat the offside trap before lifting over a centre which had it been a little lower would have presented a gift chance to MacDonald.

First threat to the Town for some time came from a free-kick which Munro got through the defensive wall and Read saved at the foot of the post.

Hitting back hard MacDonald was unlucky with an attempt from a pass by Tees.

This was quickly followed by a thrilling bit of work by French. Again the winger waltzed past the opposition before making a shot that Sheppard finger-tipped outside.

For a time Rovers carried the fight to the Town end without being really dangerous, and there was more threat when the Town came away and MacDonald had another header saved by Sheppard.

When Rovers broke again Wayne Jones was unlucky

TEAMS

LUTON TOWN: Read; Dougan, Bannister; Keen, Nicholl, Slough; Collins, MacDonald, Tees, Allen, French. Substitute: Lewis

BRISTOL ROVERS: Sheppard; Roberts, Parsons; Marsland, Taylor, Munro; Graydon, Jones (W.), Stubbs, Jones (R.), Jarman. Substitute: Jones (B.).

Referee: D. Pugh, Chester.

hands as they went to it together.

Then over the loud-speaker system came an announcement from the police that all owners of cars parked from the bridge in Kingsway to Dallow Road should remove them immediately!

Another foul on French, this time by Taylor, was followed by Allen being brought down by Graydon, who received a lecture from the referee.

Probing away again in search of a goal for the seventh consecutive match was MacDonald, who came within inches of securing it with a well-timed header from a corner by Collins.

BOOKED

More rough usage came for French, who was heavily brought down by Roberts, who this time was booked by the referee.

There was a stoppage while Marsland had attention following a collision with Dougan, and when play was on again there was another heavy raid on the Rovers goal, which brought a corner after Allen had headed the ball into the goalmouth.

This was cleared with some difficulty.

Rovers came away by judicious use of the long ball, but their finishing was not matching their approach work.

Half-time:
LUTON 1
BRISTOL ROVERS ... 0

Right from the start of the second half the Town went on to the attack with Keen pushing the ball through to Collins, whose persistence earned a corner which was cleared.

Certainly the Town were going all out for the early goal that could prove decisive, and it looked as if it might come when French

How the goals came

COLLINS for Luton after 12 minutes.
TEES for Luton after 55 minutes.
MacDONALD for Luton after 56 minutes.
ALLEN for Luton after 88 minutes

with a drive that rose just too high.

Then the Town had a final fling during which MacDonald had a header brilliantly tipped over the bar and following the corner ALLEN had time to control the ball before driving it into the roof of the net after 88 minutes.

Result:

LUTON T. 4
BRISTOL R. 0