

69/70

SOME STYLISH midfield play by the Town in the first half promised much, but a somewhat scrambled goal by Chris Nicholl was the only reward which came their way against a Stockport team which isn't exactly renowned for its water-tight defence.

Sandy Davie was rarely troubled in the Town goal whereas Ogley at the other end was kept busy with some worthy, if hardly conclusive attempts at goal by the Town.

The Town, with Jardine having passed a fitness test on a damaged ankle, were unchanged and Laurie Sheffield was nominated substitute.

On the other hand, struggling Stockport made five changes from their selected team, three of them positional, and Peter Bebbington and Alan Morton formed a new left wing.

Doug Griffiths became the substitute and there was no place for Jim Mulholland.

CROWDED

There was a big crowd, as indeed the Town were entitled to after their recent triumphs away from home. Before the match manager Alec Stock told me that there is some suspicion that Max Dougan, injured at Walsall on



Chris Nicholl put the Town ahead after 17 minutes.

Tuesday has damaged a cartilage.

"He will have exercise next week to try to determine the trouble and if it does prove to be cartilage he will be whipped into hospital for an operation," he said.

The Town looked lively from the start and after Collins had shot tamely Tees floated the ball harmlessly into the hands of Ogley from the right wing.

Stockport had not as yet developed a strictly defensive attitude, and there was a clever movement begun by Price, and finished by Morton who controlled the ball quickly and brought Davie into action.

HUSTLE

So far it had been mostly hustle and bustle with too many passes going astray. But then Tees showed the way with an intelligent pass to Keen which finally brought a centre that led to a corner. From this French won another, but nothing came of it.

Tees was looking sprightly in the opening stages and he sent away French to make a centre which Ogley scooped away from the feet of Collins.

As they began to settle down the Town were looking much the more dangerous in attack.

There was a narrow escape for Stockport when Slough picked up a throw-in from Keen and made a shot that dipped, took Ogley by surprise and topped the bar only by inches.

A heading duet between

TEAMS

LUTON T.: Davie; Jardine, Bannister; Keen, Nicholl, Slough; Collins, MacDonald, Tees, Allen, French. Sub.: Sheffield.

STOCKPORT CO.: Ogley; Haydock, Hartle; Goodwin, Campbell, Low; Price, Chapman, Rowlands, Bebbington, Morton. Sub.: Griffiths.

Referee: T. H. C. Reynolds, Swansea.

MacDonald and Tees ended with Tees heading inches wide. There were now signs of reinforcement for a Stockport defence that was threatened to be over-run.

A goal had to come and it did in the 17th minute during a desperate mix-up in front of the Stockport goal following a corner by French. As it came over, Tees headed it down and NICHOLL was right up to force it home from point-blank range.

BANGED

Immediately after that there was another sharp raid and MacDonald banged the ball over from nearly point-blank range.

Now the Town were attacking furiously, forcing Stockport back on the defensive.

There was a claim for a penalty when Tees was brought down by Campbell, but the referee didn't agree.

One or two sharp raids by Stockport found Davie completely in command of the situation. Ogley was much busier and again had to go down in a hurry from French at the end of the winger's determined run.

Stockport were in luck again when Collins worked the ball cleverly before passing to Keen, whose shot was deflected, and Campbell headed the ball backwards, luckily for him into the hands of Ogley.

There was a chance at the other end when Morton from the right wing sent over a centre that Rowlands swung at, and if he had connected the Town would have been in trouble.

CLEVER

Some clever football was coming from the Town in midfield but the goals were not forthcoming and the crowd was becoming restive.

Stockport were now placing more emphasis on defence and leaving only Rowlands and Morton upfield.

A bad foul by Campbell on Tees brought the Town a free-kick but again the Stockport defence covered up.

Campbell next misjudged a long clearance by Davie, which sent Tees haring to goal.

Then hopes were raised again when Allen came through strongly but his shot with plenty of power was on the wrong beam altogether and finished a couple of yards wide.

Fouls now were becoming more frequent against Stockport as they struggled to keep in the game. Another which brought a free-kick out on the left wing brought more good work by Ogley, who had cut out a fair proportion of the centres.

Almost on the stroke of half-time Allen was pulled down a couple of yards outside the penalty area and before the free-kick was taken the referee had to pace out

the required 10 yards because Stockport had lined up scarcely half that distance from the ball—not that it mattered because after a scrimmage, MacDonald placed the ball wide. Half-time:

LUTON 1
STOCKPORT 0

It had been a disappointing first-half with the Town on top, but again finding difficulty in penetrating a spoiling defence.

Tees was a bit unlucky to slip at the crucial moment when racing in an attempt to get at a centre by French.

There was a gallant attempt by MacDonald to turn to best use a through pass from Allen, and though floored in a tackle by Campbell he recovered only to be forestalled by Ogley.

SAVED

Then suddenly Stockport launched a heavy attack in which the Town goal was in some danger, and it was fortunate for them that Keen was in the line of fire from a point-blank shot by Chapman.

As if taking confidence from that, Stockport prospered for a time and Hartle, resuming momentarily his customary position of outside-left, was quite comfortably wide of the far post.

Hesitation in front of goal cost the Town success when they returned to the attack, and MacDonald and Collins were particularly slow to accept half-chances.

French and Collins had now switched wings in an effort to bring about an improvement, and there was no doubt that improvement was necessary.

Yet they were continuing to have more of the pressure, and French should have done better than to merely earn a corner after being sent away by Jardine.

At the same time this produced more heavy work for the Stockport defence.

Then at last came their biggest chance to put themselves

How the goals came

NICHOLL for Luton after 17 minutes.
MacDONALD (penalty) for Luton after 60 minutes.

in an all together more comfortable position when they were awarded a penalty.

Tees had his feet whipped from him by Goodwin, and there was no hesitation in awarding a penalty. Before the kick was taken Tees had to have attention from Branston, who received an encouraging cheer from the Town.

Macdonald took the kick, and he coolly side-footed the ball just inside the post to beat Ogley after exactly an hour.

This seemed to be the spur the Town needed because they raced to the attack after this and more gaps began to appear in the Stockport defence than had been the case previously.

Tees was out of luck soon afterwards when with his back to the goal he flicked in a pass by Collins passed Ogley, who was completely perplexed by the move. However, the referee disallowed the goal on the grounds of offside.

TACKLED

French, still operating on the right wing, was not being given a great deal of scope, and there was then a fantastic rugby-style tackle on him from behind by Bebbington.

For a second or two there was a rare old mix-up, and the result was that the referee spoke to both players, although the free-kick went in the Town's favour. From it Allen headed the ball inches wide.