It's a goal! Luton's Chris Nicholl hooks the ball through a packed Stockport defence

TWO GOALS KEEP UNBEATEN RECORD

Luton Town 2

Stockport Co. 0

2912 4-10-69

By ROGER DUCKWORTH

GOALS by Nicholl and Macdonald were enough to keep Luton's unbeaten League record at Kenilworth Road this afternoon.

The Hatters' goals came in each half of a match which was more notable for Stockport's fouling than its football.

[illegible] full-back Pred Jardine his first senior [illegible] choice.

Jardine, who had a fitness test on an ankle yesterday morning, came in for the injured Max Dougan at right-back.

Dougan, who was injured at Walsall on Tuesday, has a knee injury and before today's kick-off manager Alec Stock said that cartilage trouble is suspected and that further tests would be made on Dougan's knee early next week.

Otherwise the Luton team was unchanged. Laurie Sheffield was named as substitute.

Defensive

But there were a host of changes in the Stockport side and even before the kick-off showed they might be relying on a defensive policy when they named two defenders, Beddington and Chapman, as inside-forwards.

The match was televised by Anglia for screening tomorrow afternoon.

A largish crowd gathered well before the kick-off expecting Luton, runaway leaders of the Third Division, to crack in a few goals against Stockport, who are next to bottom.

Obviously wanting to loosen up after their long trip this morning Stockport took to the field ten minutes before the kick-off for an extensive kick-about.

With two fine away wins immediately behind them the Luton team got a good reception when the players ran out.

There was something of a surprise when Town reserve centre half and former skipper Terry Branston appeared on the touchline with the trainer's bag and all dressed for action in a smart new track suit.

It was the first time that Terry, who has played several times for the first team this season, has taken over the job of sponge man.

Pressure

From the start, Jardine showed he has lost none of his old cool headedness when, under pressure, he chased a long ball back into his own goalmouth into the hands of Davie, who had to dive at his feet.

An attack on the left by Beddington, which produced a good centre, might have had better results for Stockport, but centre forward Rowlands, was hurried into a left-foot shot and hit the ball about three times the height of the bar.

In the second minute some hooligan in the crowd at the Oak Road end tossed a firework into the Stockport goal, and it exploded in a puff of smoke behind goalkeeper Alan Ogley.

The first real raid from the Town came in the fourth minute, when a long throw-in by Keen was half cleared, and Collins got in a shot from the rebound. But it lacked power and went straight to Ogley.

From the early stages it was obvious that Stockport were going to defend with everything they had got, and on several occasions they had nine men deep in defence. But once when they broke, Morton, their left-winger, got in a decent-looking shot, but it gave Davie no trouble.

Luton really looked at sixes and sevens early on and could find no rhythm in their play. Even when they won a couple of corners on the right, short ones were attempted and came to nothing at all.

After ten minutes the Town produced a really good-looking attack and it very nearly brought a goal.

Tees sent French away with a good pass, and the winger's left-footed centre was well met in the air by Collins. Goalkeeper Ogley was already moving in the wrong direction and had to rely on a flag-kick as he lay on the ground to prevent a goal.

TEAMS

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

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

GOALS

NICHOLL (Luton) 16 min

MACDONALD (Luton, pen) 61 min

Referee: Mr T. Reynolds (Swansea).

Attendance: 15,944

And two minutes later Slough was just over the top with a long shot which dipped late following a throw-in on the right by Keen.

Again the Luton defence looked slow when a tricky little run by Price was continued into the goalmouth by Chapman and Beddington. It took some good covering by Allen to alleviate the situation.

Fortunate

After 16 minutes the Town went ahead in a somewhat fortunate manner, although the way the goal was started was well met.

Keen centred and full back Haydock could do little but concede a corner. From French's kick Ogley failed to hold the ball under pressure from Tees and Macdonald and the ball bounced on to the ground right in front of goal.

It was centre half Chris NICHOLL who finally put the ball into the net.

Within a minute leading scorer Malcolm Macdonald went close to getting a second. A ball into the edge of the penalty area was pushed on to him and his first-timer shaved the bar.

Luton were able to make nothing of a free kick into the box by Bannister following a bruising foul on Macdonald by Campbell on the left-hand touchline.

Open goal

In the 23rd minute Tees missed an open goal for Luton. An appalling back pass to his goalkeeper by Chapman gave the Luton centre-forward all the time in the world to run on the the ball and pick his spot.

But he looked so surprised at such a golden opportunity presenting itself that all he could do was to turn and shoot with his left foot quickly and Ogley made a good diving save to his left.

From this scare County went straight into attack, and Davie gathered the ball at the feet of Morton.

Campbell continued to hand out a bit of the tough stuff in midfield, but Luton's appeals for a penalty were turned down when he bowled Tees over in the box.

The most ambitious individual move came after 27 minutes by Graham French. Collecting the ball on the half-way line he forced his way through two rough tackles, one of them by Campbell, and continued a determined path for goal.

He eventually got his shot in but was under close marking and the effort lacked force.

There was another firework explosion in the Oak Road end and three policemen moved in to keep an eye on what was going on.

A neat move by Macdonald and Collins found the ball back at Keen's feet and he caused some turmoil in the County defence with a hard shot which found its way to Ogley after a couple of deflections.

Another good centre from the right for Stockport came to nothing when centre-forward Rowlands mishit a shot in front of goal.

Keen was having a fine match in midfield where his control was a treat to watch. But his former QPR colleague Collins was not having the same amount going right for him in the first half hour, and at times looked at a loss as to how to provide the best opening for his colleagues.

Collins ran well to win a corner off Campbell and again it was put across by French. Ogley just won a duel with Macdonald and cleared the danger.

Hustled away

Referee Reynolds decided to have a word with Campbell after he sent Tees flying in the middle of the field. Bannister took the free kick but again it was hustled away by the packed defence of Stockport.

Tees challenged for a long goal kick by Davie, and Ogley only just beat him to it on the second bounce.

Luton wanted another goal before the break — and so did the fans. In an effort to do something about it Allen burst into the penalty box and hit a hard right-footed drive wide of the far post.

Macdonald might have done better with an attempted header following a corner by Collins from the left.

With half-time looming Allen set off another raid into the box, and just as he approached the 18-yard line he was tripped blatantly by Chapman. Macdonald hammered the free kick at the defensive wall and then hit the rebound over the top.

HT: Luton 1, Stockport 0

Some of the scrappiness of the first half spilled over into the second. A move by French on the left ended in him being overturned by his full-back and probes by Macdonald and Tees down the middle brought no success.

Breaking from way back in his own half, French worked a good move along the left touchline with Bannister and won a corner. From this Ogley again left his line to punch clear, but Luton began to look a little more dangerous as they moved about just outside the penalty area.

Town were moving into open spaces better as the second half got under way and a neat move between Slough and Allen in the middle and Collins up front saw another centre from French which upset Stockport and again it was Ogley who had to come to their rescue with a smart bit of aerial work.

Luton were caught in some trouble when a long throw in by Morton was bandied about the goalmouth. Chapman got a clear shot at goal and Keen had to come to the rescue by blocking the shot that looked destined for the back of the net.

The ball was not running for Luton, and within a minute Tees, Macdonald and Collins were unable to control badly bouncing balls quickly enough to get in a shot.

Jardine showed he still has a lot of good football in him with a fine piece of ball play on the touchline to send French away. The Luton winger won a corner and Luton really began to press as their crosses were desperately cleared from the goalmouth.

On the hour Luton were awarded a penalty when Macdonald shoved the ball into the penalty box and Tees, who was racing in to finish off the move, was tripped by Goodwin.

Mr Reynolds immediately pointed at the spot, and after Tees had received some treatment from Terry Branston, MACDONALD hit [illegible] penalty past Ogley for Luto[illegible] second goal.

Another move by Fre[illegible] and Macdonald, which en[illegible] in a Slough shot roaring o[illegible] the bar, set the Luton fa[illegible] singing.

For the first time in [illegible] match Luton began to m[illegible] sweetly — and the result [illegible] some desperation by Sto[illegible]port. One example of this [illegible] when Tees was hacked do[illegible] from behind by Rowlands, w[illegible] was given a talking-to by [illegible] referee.

In the 68th minute Lu[illegible] had the ball in the net ag[illegible] with as cool a piece of work [illegible] I've seen this season. Colli[illegible] nudged on a long centre [illegible] Tees and the centre forwa[illegible] calmly back-heeled it into [illegible] net. But he must have be[illegible] offside.

Spoiling tactics

French and Collins h[illegible] swopped wings and there w[illegible] a peculiar incident in the 72[illegible] minute when French bro[illegible] away and Morton jumped [illegible] his back for a ride. T[illegible] Stockport player would not [illegible] go and rather stupidly Fren[illegible] aimed a kick to dislodge [illegible] rider.

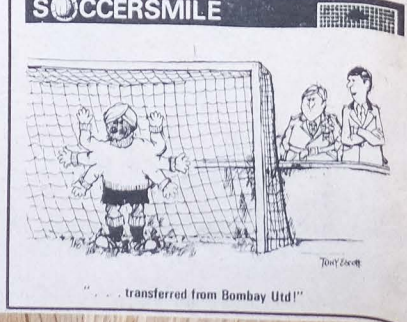
Both received a lecture b[illegible] Luton got the free kick fro[illegible] which Allen headed wide.

Stockport were using a lot [illegible] spoiling tactics which did n[illegible] help and after 75 minutes th[illegible] conceded their 20th free kick.

With six minutes to go Lut[illegible] almost made it 3-0 wh[illegible] Macdonald rose well to head [illegible] centre from French just wi[illegible] of the left-hand post.

Gollins brought a cheer wi[illegible] a neat run through the midd[illegible] after a Keen pass.

Stockport goalkeeper Ogley gets his hands to the ball as Matt Tees and Ch[illegible] Nicholl close in



". . . transferred from Bombay Utd!"