

Own goal almost

Luton Town 1

Torquay Utd 1

By ROGER DUCKWORTH

LUTON looked like losing their unbeaten home run against their ex-manager's side this afternoon in tragic circumstances — an own goal by John Ryan.

But from the moment Lewis substituted in the second half, Town looked revitalised, and a goal from Tees brought a share of the points.

Former Town manager Allan Brown returned to Kenilworth Road this afternoon as manager of Torquay — and brought with him Luton's most serious home challenge of the season.

The Town, unbeaten at home for the past 37 matches, expected a tough match against the seashiders, who, in third place, are putting up a serious challenge to the Town's Third Division supremacy.

Luton were without full back Fred Jardine, who was missing because of a thigh injury sustained at Brighton last week. He was replaced by John Ryan, who played the first five matches of the season in the first team.

Manager Alec Stock made an interesting move by naming Brian Lewis as substitute. Lewis has been out since the early weeks of the season through injury and loss of form, but he underlined his return to form by thumping home four goals in a friendly match against Marlow.

Heavy rain eased up just before the match, but 20 minutes before the kick-off the ground looked well filled.

Mr Brown received a big cheer from the Town fans when he appeared on the touchline. The Luton crowd will not quickly forget the way this chap pulled their club out of the doldrums to guide them to the Fourth Division championship two seasons ago.

Mascot

One of the Luton "stars" before the match was today's lucky mascot, ten-year-old Godfrey Ingram, of Hadrian Avenue, Dunstable. The little boy was a quick favourite with the crowd when he "scored" past Davie after leading the team out.

Town went straight into the attack, and in the first move of the match Keith Allen worked hard before getting a shot, which was very nearly deflected past goalkeeper Donnelly as Macdonald ran in.

Torquay hit back, and Cave and Mitchinson worked well to the edge of the box where Nicholl dispelled the danger.

A mistake by Collins on the grandstand touchline let in winger Scott, who outstripped the Luton defence and sent a good cross curling over towards the Oak Road goal. Unfortunately for him it curled just too far and went out of play.

There was certainly a defensive flavour about Torquay's line-up. For most of the time only centre forward Rudge was upfield, and even wingers Scott and Benson were inclined to play deep.

Benson was well back in defence when he was hurt while stopping Keen, and he had to receive some lengthy treatment.

Cleared

A foul on French by Sandercock gave the Luton winger a free kick towards the left hand corner flag. It was

began to assert their authority.

A long lob from Allen into the penalty box saw Tees impeded by Kitchener as he worked into a scoring position. Tees slowed up and looked at the referee, waiting for his whistle. It never came.

For Torquay, Cave put in a good centre from the right, but Davie continued where he left off last week and made a magnificent fingertip catch to spoil any ideas Scott might have had of heading home the cross.

Own goal

Ryan was performing well on his come-back when a couple of times he swung across splendid centres, but after 20 minutes the Town fans were silent when RYAN deflected a shot from Mitchinson past Davie.

Luton are scoring far too many goals for the other side at the moment, and Davie would have easily gathered Mitchinson's shot had Ryan not made an attempt to intercept.

Scott went away on the left and pushed the ball inside to Mitchinson. He hit it hopefully at goal from outside the penalty area, and Davie committed himself to going one way. He was stranded by Ryan's deflection.

There was some more slackness in the Luton defence when Cave chased a long ball into the penalty box. Davie raced out and courageously cleared for touch.

There seemed to be a certain lack of bite at the centre of the Town attack, where both Tees and Macdonald were getting short change from the tall young Kitchener.

A centre by Keen revived the Town's hopes of equalising when Collins calmly pulled the ball down with one foot and hit it with the other. But it was blocked by a defender.

Some real Luton pressure followed, with Tees, Mac-

TEAMS

LUTON TOWN: Davie; Ryan, Bannister, Keen, Nicholl, Skough, Collins, Macdonald, Tees, Allen, French. Sub: Lewis.

TORQUAY: Donnelly; Sandercock, Glozier, Dunne, Young, Kitchener, Benson, Cave, Rudge, Mitchinson, Scott. Sub: Welsh.

Referee: Mr N. Graham (Newbiggin).

GOALS

RYAN own goal (Torquay) 20 min.
TEES (Luton) 57 min

Attendance: 16,087

donald and French all having a go before the ball was eventually cleared.

Rescue

When Allen won another corner for Luton, taken by French, there was an air of expectancy from the Luton crowd. Nicholl, the tall centre half, moved up into the goalmouth, but French put over a poor one, and Torquay easily cleared.

Davie came to the Town's rescue again in the 35th minute when he neatly caught a good cross from Sandercock, who had overlapped and beaten Bannister.

puts paid to record



Matt Tees, second left, Luton's scorer, unsettles the visiting defence

Four minutes before half time, Allan Brown appeared on the touchline and called off centre forward Rudge, who had earlier been limping. He was replaced by Alan Welsh.

In the 43rd minute Luton's best effort came — and again it was from Macdonald.

From a midfield position the Luton striker beat Young and cracked in a hard right-footer from inside the box, but towards the right touchline, and Donnelly was forced to dive sharply to save.

A Luton attack between French and Allen was spoiled when the ball went back to Bannister and "bobbled" as he shaped to shoot.

HT: Luton 0, Torquay 1

Five minutes into the second half Luton had some hard luck. A good cross from Collins hit Macdonald's head and the ball went up into the air. Allen challenged the Torquay goalkeeper, who managed to fist the ball clear, and Macdonald was unable to get his foot to the bouncing ball before it was swept away by Kitchener.

As soon as Luton looked like making any progress towards goal, nine yellow Torquay shirts immediately fell back to form a blanket defence across the edge of the penalty area. For most of the time Luton looked as if they were hitting their heads against a brick wall.

Every credit must be given to the way the Torquay defence played. They were fast and solid, and often won a loose ball that might have been expected to Luton's way.

A long throw in from Allen

produced another mad scramble in the Torquay goalmouth, and from it Collins appeared to receive a facial injury that needed considerable attention. He was then sent running to the dressing room by trainer Reg Game holding a swab to his forehead.

Equaliser

A couple of minutes after Collins headed for the dressing room Lewis ran on to substitute. Lewis scored 23 goals for the Town last season, and is always a favourite with the crowd, and he received a big welcome.

The first time that Lewis came into contact with the ball led to Luton scoring the equaliser.

Lewis went in hard with Young and won a free kick 30 yards from goal. It was thumped across by Keen, and after some splendid running Allen appeared by the far post and headed the ball back across the goalmouth out of Donnelly's reach.

And there was TEES, steaming in on to the goal-line, to force the ball home with his head.

The goal revitalised the Town. All of a sudden they all looked a foot taller, and began winning those balls that had previously gone the other way.

Luton's goal came in the 57th minute, and four minutes later Lewis had the chance of putting the Town ahead. But he was bundled off the ball as he went for a French cross.

And a minute later a Tees header was booted off the goal-line. From where I was sitting it looked as if the ball might even have crossed the line. It

certainly couldn't have been far off.

With 20 minutes of the second half gone, Tees, who had been getting a lot of punishment, was felled by the over-enthusiastic Kitchener, and Luton won another free kick. Keen chipped it over, and Nicholl headed over the top.

Slough joined in an attack and did well to head on a long throw from Keen. The ball went into touch again, and this time it was Allen who put in the hard work before Torquay cleared.

Anxious

Both teams were rather over-anxious to take the lead, and for ten minutes the match became rather scrappy. Until then there had been lots of thrills and excitement, and fast play from both sides coupled with a great deal of skill.

There was a real duel developing between Lewis and Young, but the referee kept a keen eye on it.

Torquay were still relying a lot on a massed defence, and Luton found it virtually impossible to penetrate its layers. The seashiders had obviously settled for a point by the latter stages, and hoping for quick breaks.

Luton almost got through in the 83rd minute when Lewis slipped a short one inside his man. It took a brave save from Donnelly to take the ball off Allen's feet.

Another instance of weak refereeing came to light when Young and Lewis had another go in the penalty area just before the end.



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