



Typical incident in Bury's desperate defence against the Town at Kenilworth Road on Tuesday evening.

Really! This is too hospitable!

69/70

LUTON TOWN 0, BURY 0

By ERIC PUGH

REALLY, this result was carrying the cause of hospitality too far, but Kenilworth Road, in the past the graveyard of so many visiting teams' hopes, is now becoming almost a home from home for opponents.

Of the last seven visitors, five have gone away with some reward, and the loss of seven points during this period has taken the edge off the Town's promotion bid.

In view of what went on, this was a fantastic result, made even more unexpected by the fact that Bury have the worst defensive record in the Division. Frankly, they looked it, too, as they struggled nearly all the first half.

There was plenty of urgency and movement by the Town, with the early ancillary support of Ryan and Slough threatening to cause havoc down the Bury left flank.

Bury were uncertain, too, in the middle. Chances had to come for the Town, and they did. The first of five I counted in the first half, ended when MacDonald missed the far post from Ryan's pass.

Headed wide

Then Harrison should have done better than head wide from a centre by Keen, and this was followed by Tees hitting the side netting from close in and then shooting straight at the feet of Ramsbottom as the goalkeeper came out.

Something similar happened when Collins broke through, and the effect was that the Town became more and more frustrated.

For almost the whole of the 45 minutes, it was one-way traffic, with Bury breaking out only infrequently. Once, Davie caused concern by misjudging a high ball, but fortunately for him, it went for a corner.

The only Bury move that promised a goal, came when a Kerr centre was destined for the head of Jones until Ryan intervened in spectacular style.

Had the goals come for the Town as they should, there would have been praise for the way they played, but smart approach is no earthly use without the vital end product.

Having survived what was for them, a torrid first half, Bury's defence showed more composure afterwards, doubtless

inspired by the fine anticipation and handling of Ramsbottom, who seemed to attract the ball like a magnet.

A fairly ominous gap down their middle was remedied to some extent, and the Town did not find the clear openings accruing as they had. What did crop up were more or less half chances, until the dying seconds of the match.

Then, it seemed that all the frustration was about to be removed when a quick movement left MacDonald a few yards from goal with only Ramsbottom to beat.

Tried too hard

Possibly, mindful of what had gone before, he tried to make absolutely certain, perhaps waited a split second too long and the brave Ramsbottom dived at his feet to smother the shot, after which the ball was scrambled for a corner.

Seldom will the Town's defence have a more comfortable match, with Branstons back to marshal it in his own rugged style. There is no doubt that his strong presence is of the utmost value.

Even though short of match practice, Bannister returned to give his usual compact, neat display, and Ryan, surely the most improved player in the side, was outstanding, with Moore completing a sound back four.

In midfield, Keen was more impressive than Collins, who was replaced by Allen 17 minutes from the end; and Slough did not maintain his tearaway start.

For the moment, MacDonald has mislaid his goal-touch. Shots that would normally go in, are now missing by inches. That will not last, and I find more worrying, the lack of penetration presented by Tees, who is working hard enough without getting the goals.

Possibly there could have been a different story had French been available, because there was a somewhat pedestrian display by Harrison, who certainly should have made better use of the ball.

LUTON TOWN: Davie; Ryan, Bannister; Slough, Branstons, Moore; MacDonald, Collins (Allen), Tees, Keen, Harrison.

BURY: Ramsbottom; Tinney, Saile; Hughes, Lyon, Holt; McDermott, Arrowsmith (Towers), Jones, Kerr, Hince.

Referee: B. H. Daniels, Rainham.

Attendance: 12,751.