

TOWN'S SAD DAY OF RECKONING

72/73

Sheffield Wed 4 Luton Tn 0



PETER RODRIGUES

THIS WAS the day Luton's defence finally gave out. After weeks of containing their opponents to the odd goal they were well and truly trounced.

While Luton's attack continually bashed its head against the solid Wednesday defence, the Owls front-runners had a field day with Holsgrove, Rodrigues, Prendergast and Eustace getting in on the act.

As expected Alan Garner was left out of the Luton side because of the groin injury he received in the cup-tie against Birmingham. His place in the heart of Luton's defence was taken by Alan Slough.

The Luton substitute was John Moore, who was preferred to Gordon Hindson, who also travelled. Otherwise Luton were unchanged.

On the Sheffield side, leading goalscorer Brian Joicey failed a fitness test on a shoulder injury and had to remain on the sidelines. His place was again taken by David Sunley who deputised when Sheffield lost at Oxford during the week.

The substitute for Wednesday was the controversial Peter Swan who is having his first season back in football after eight years following a bribery investigation.

Because the Town's white shorts clashed with the blue and white stripes of Wednesday, Luton changed into their smart new red shirts with white collars but kept their black shorts.

Danger

Wednesday made most of the opening gambits and a long free kick through the middle posed Luton a problem until Slough fell back quickly to relieve the danger.

But some good defensive tackling back by John Ryan on Henderson won Luton possession and his pass through the middle found Halom.

He tested Grummitt with a difficult shot which bounced just in front of the diving keeper who did well to catch it.

The thrills were kept going when Rodrigues had an overlap on the right and Barber dived forward to catch the ball amid a ruck of players.

Back came the Town and a sweet move between Fern, Halom and Anderson ended with Aston blinding in a powerful shot from the left which brought another good save out of the surprised Grummitt.

Just over

Barber was in the thick of things when he fumbled a cross from Sunley in a collision with Thomson but he recovered quickly.

From his clearance, Halom and Jimmy Ryan worked well to provide an opening for Anderson who smashed a hard shot just over the crossbar.

Then Busby got up well to a cross from Aston but was unable to get much power behind a header which the Sheffield goalkeeper caught easily.

In the 14th minute Sheffield might have grabbed a goal. Barber misjudged a left-wing corner from Sissons but Faulkner managed to head it away.

The ball went straight to

Sunley, however, who crashed in a shot and Barber flung himself to his left to turn it round for a second corner.

This again bothered him and his attempt to fist clear lacked conviction. But luckily for Luton Anderson fell back to sort the job out.

Seconds later the Luton

outside the box on the right and smashed in one of the best goals I have seen. His shot completely beat Barber with sheer power.

Some determined work by Jimmy Ryan gave John Ryan the opportunity to centre. Halom beat Grummitt with his head but his effort went over.

Both players were injured in the collision and both had to have treatment. Halom appeared to have injured a hip and Grummitt his head, but both were able to continue.

Then Halom sent Busby away with a superb pass. The Luton centre-forward controlled the ball well but his shot struck Grummitt and flipped over the bar.

Then Luton nearly pulled a goal back. With Fern doing much of the work a terrific goalmouth scramble ensued and after at least two Luton players had had a go, Aston put the ball wide.

HT: Sheffield Wed 2, Luton 0

Aston put in the best pass of the afternoon, a crossfield to Jim Ryan who shot over the top after swapping passes with Halom, but gradually Luton began to snuff out the fire of Wednesday.

A terrific shot from Aston's left foot was brilliantly turned round the post by Grummitt.

In the 58th minute, however, PRENDERGAST put an end to Luton's ambitions.

A terrific headed clearance from Mullen went out to the left to Sissons. He timed his centre beautifully and Prendergast nipped in between two of his colleagues to head low just inside the far post. Barber must have been unsighted for he looked to dive late.

In the 65th minute John Moore was sent on to replace Fern. It was his first appearance

of the season and he went straight into his old position in defence to give Slough a chance of joining the midfield brigade.

A Busby break ended with him pushing the ball back to Anderson who beat his man before shooting from about 20 yards. But his shot was deflected for a corner.

Sheffield continued to look strong in defence and Luton were rarely allowed within the danger zone. As a result a shot had to be tried from in front of the defence and with yet

By ROGER DUCKWORTH

MATCH FACTS

SHEFFIELD WEDNESDAY:
Grummitt; Rodrigues, Clements, Mullen, Holsgrove, Craig, Henderson, Eustace, Sunley, Prendergast, Sissons.
Sub: Swan.

LUTON TOWN: Barber; John Ryan, Thomson, Anderson, Faulkner, Slough, Jimmy Ryan, Fern, Busby, Halom, Aston.
Sub: Moore.

Referee: Mr K. Burns (Stourbridge).

HOLSGROVE (Wednesday)

26 mins

RODRIGUES (Wednesday)

30 mins

PRENDERGAST (Wednesday)

58 mins

EUSTACE (Wednesday)

76 mins

Attendance: 18,913

defence really boomed. Little Tommy Craig beat the offside trap and raced away all on his own.

Barber started to leave his line but looked uncertain and just tried to narrow the angle. Craig hacked a shot over his head but it bounced a foot wide of the far post with nobody else within 25 yards of the action.

Sheffield took the lead in the 26th minute in sensational fashion. A fast clearance from Craig was collected by Prendergast who was under pressure from Faulkner.

The Luton centre-half blatantly pulled back the Wednesday man who shook off his attentions, broke clear and smashed a shot against the crossbar.

Injured

Referee Burns, who had let play go on, then whistled Faulkner up, took his name and awarded Sheffield a free kick from just outside the box.

It was taken up by Craig but centre-half HOLSGROVE slipped past Slough to nudge the ball past Barber.

Four minutes later RODRIGUES collected a pass well

VERDICT

LUTON took a real pounding at Hillsborough this afternoon where an attractive Wednesday side exploited gaps in the defence and managed to hold the Town attack in check.

But give them their credit, Luton never stopped trying. Even though they were outplayed in general, they put in two 15-minute spells of high-class football at the start of each half without being able to score.

Little went right for centre-forward Busby and the Town were restricted to long-range shooting, little of which was on target.

Aston had the best effort, but Grummitt made a superb one-handed save.

Questions

Questions will be raised about the holes in the Luton defence but it might all so easily have gone the other way.

The first goal came after 26 minutes when Holsgrove netted from a free kick. Previously the referee had allowed play to go on following a foul by Faulkner on Prendergast who went on to hit the bar.

Four minutes later Rodrigues caught Barber on the wrong foot with a long-range power drive and in the 58th minute Prendergast headed number three through the Luton defence.

The fourth Wednesday goal was all too easy. Eustace just lobbed the ball into the net from well out on the left.

Even so the Town continued their policy of going forward en masse whenever they were allowed and their new attacking ideas brought them some favourable comments in the press room at half-time.

another of these Aston went over the top.

Thomson escaped a booking after pulling the shirt of Sunley. Mr Burns made do with a shake of the fist in the direction of the Luton full-back.

There were again gaps appearing in the Luton defence, and in the 76th minute Peter Eustace spotted one and calmly lobbed a long shot from the left over the head of Barber into the net.

A minute later Wednesday sent on Peter Swan in the place of Craig. The former

England international received a terrific welcome.

With the second running out Barber made the save of the match to stop Henderson knocking in a fifth.