

Pompey fight in vain

Luton goal ends early promise

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By MIKE NEASOM

POMPEY 0, LUTON TOWN 2

Pompey slipped depressingly to their first home defeat of the season today, when they were eventually outsmarted and out-gunned by a slicker and cleverer Luton Town side, in a patchy match, before another depressingly small crowd.

It was Chris Kamara's big day, with the 17-year-old making his debut in an otherwise unchanged Pompey team. It meant Pompey fielding two apprentices, the other, of course, being 17-year-old Steve Foster, who was playing his third match.

Kamara was in midfield, where Luton were without their mainspring of skipper Alan West. He was out with a shoulder injury, and his place went to one-time Arsenal player Brian Chambers.

Luton's other change from the side which thrashed Chelsea last Saturday was that Peter Spring took over from the suspended John Aston.

POMPEY: Lloyd, Roberts, Piper, Reynolds, Went, Hand, Marinello, Kane, Graham, Foster, Kamara. Sub: McGuinness.
LUTON: Barber, John Ryan, Buckley, Anderson, Faulkner, Paul Fitcher, King, Alston, Ron Fitcher, Chambers, Spiring, Sub: Jimmy Ryan.
Referee: Mr. C. B. White (Harrow).

The action started with Went's through ball putting Foster away, but Paul Fitcher was quick to spot the danger and safely pushed the ball back to Barber.

Luton, playing with almost arrogant poise, dominated the early minutes, and after only five minutes, Lloyd was extended into sharp action.

The danger came from a neat little move out on the right between Spiring and King, and was ended by a firm low shot by

Luton weathered the storm, and once more the balance shifted. Roberts pulled off two timely interceptions — the second after magnificently reading Spiring's through pass for Ron Fitcher — and the danger was blunted, but then, in the 39th minute, Pompey's good work was undone as a sudden probe down the right saw Luton pinch the lead.

Anderson and Spiring combined to create the danger. Lloyd was drawn off his line as Anderson shaped to shoot, but instead the ball was squared to the unmarked KING and his 15-yard drive crashed into the corner of the net via Reynolds's despairing fingertips.

Pompey desperately tried to pull one back, and in the last seconds from a corner by Reynolds, the ball finished up in the corner of Luton's net after an untidy goalmouth maul, but Foster had been penalized for nudging the goalkeeper, and the small crowd's premature goal roar was cut short.

Half-time:
PORTSMOUTH 0
LUTON 1

Luton's composure had been restored by that goal, and the second half opened with them putting pressure on Pompey's defence.

Went gifted them an early corner from which Faulkner was allowed a free header over the bar. Another leisurely move eventually worked the ball out to Buckley, and although Reynolds failed to cut out his low cross, he recovered in time to help Roberts crowd out Spiring.

Pompey could now find little of the life that had given them territorial control for much of the first half, and then in the 55th minute their first move of note of the half had a disastrous ending.

It was built up by Kamara and Piper, whose pass put Marinello in full flight. His ball to Foster caught the youngster facing the wrong way and by the time he had controlled it and turned the chance of a pass to Graham had gone.

Luton's break-out from that momentary threat ended with them increasing their lead.

Lurking

Once again Anderson and Spiring contrived to create the danger. Anderson put a neat pass out to Spiring on the right, and, when his low cross rifled across Pompey's goal, Went and Roberts just failed to intercept.

Ron Fitcher lurking beyond the far post shoved

Pompey's debut boy Chris Kamara makes a run but is halted by John Ryana's sliding tackle

COMMENT

Pompey's dream of boosting their confidence for Wednesday's League Cup tie came unstuck at Fratton today. For 30 minutes in the first half they looked capable of jolting Luton out of their arrogant composure.

Once they had conceded a goal late in the first half, a point was beyond them.

In the end, they could probably think themselves lucky that the margin of their defeat was in fact so slender for Luton carved their way through almost at will in the second half, but tossed away some glorious chances with indifferent finishing.

So it was a sad big day for 17-year-old Chris Kamara, who had his moments in the first half, but the longer the play went on the less contact the gangling 17-year-old was able to make with the proceedings.

That is not his fault. A year ago he was still in amateur youth football, and there were others on the pitch today — Pompey players with far more experience, who found it equally difficult to make any notable impression on the match.

To fill the kid's cup to overflowing, Kamara got himself booked in the dying seconds for a blatant bit of shirt pulling.

it back into the middle of the goal area, where ALSTON was caught with his back to the goal, but was still allowed the time to turn and force it under Lloyd's diving body.

Pompey now endured a torrid time. Luton's confidence was sky high and their moves began to assume an arrogant air which stretched and tormented Pompey's hard-worked defence.

Pompey could not get themselves back into the match, and, in the 74th minute it took a fine distinctive save by Lloyd to prevent them falling deeper into trouble.

A corner by Spiring just cleared Roberts, leaving Faulkner with a clear shot which was thundered against the goalkeeper's body.

Reynolds's long-range ballistics offered Pompey their one real chance of a goal when, in the 76th minute, he ran on to a return pass by Graham, calmly dragged the ball past a defender and from 25 yards unleashed a left-foot drive, which brought another brilliant save from Barber.

It was a scant moment of Pompey cheer, and, as play switched to the other end, a lucky bounce rescued Pompey from a third goal.

Spiring's header from King's cross hammered against the inside of the



Heads you lose . . . despite frantic dives, both Pompey's Steve Foster (right) and a Luton defender are beaten by this centre from Kamara.

GOALS

King 39 min.

Alston 55 min.

Anderson which Pompey's goalkeeper took at full strength.

Luton's poise almost became their downfall in the seventh minute, when Paul Fitcher tried to be just too clever back in defence.

His pass across his own penalty area, aimed for Buckley, was too cocky. Young Foster intercepted it, but, before he could use it, he was robbed by Buckley's tremendous tackle. The ball broke to Reynolds, and from 20 yards his fiercely struck right-foot shot brought a fine save from Barber.

Promising

It was a promising start, with Pompey responding to Luton's challenge well, and Reynolds quickly made his power felt in midfield.

Young Kamara had found much of the action passing him by early on, but in the seventh minute he made his first real impact — and impressively.

He got away on the left in pursuit of Marinello's pass and let go a fierce low cross. Foster hurled himself full length and just failed to connect with a header.

Then Kamara tucked a fine through ball out to the right to set Graham free, but, at the end of a promising movement, Marinello was caught offside as Piper tried to put him clear.

Suddenly the emphasis switched, and Pompey were making all the running beginning to make Luton's defence look anything but composed.

The key lay in midfield, where Reynolds was storming through the game subduing the talented Anderson. Kamara was beginning to find increasing self-belief and room on the left from which to create problems.

Marinello twice tried shots but neither got past the covering full-back, although the second rebounded to Kamara and the youngster brought applause from Graham for a fiercely shot first time shot that thudded just wide.