

Round breaks the Ewood Park ice

By DAVID ALLIN

BLACKBURN ROVERS and Luton Town fought a desperate battle for promotion points on an Ewood Park pitch more suited to ice-hockey than Second Division football

Players on both sides had the utmost difficulty in keeping their feet and the longer the game progressed the more likely it became that one goal would settle the issue.

And it was substitute Paul Round who got up to head home a well-worked move, involving Hird, Brotherston, Metcalfe and Bailey, to put Rovers one up.

Rovers had a pre kick-off shock when club skipper Tony Parkes failed a fitness test on the hamstring injury that has kept him out of the side for 14 days.

Parke's No. 10 shirt was taken by substitute Gordon Taylor and young striker Paul Round was on the substitutes bench.

David Hargreaves, the 23-year-old gardener with Hyndburn parks department made his home debut alongside tall defender John Waddington who was drafted into attack.

Glen Keeley, who was suspended for three matches, returned in the middle of the back four for his first match since the FA Cup third round tie against Shrewsbury.

Luton were at full-strength with club captain Alan West, only recently recovered from a broken ankle, in mid-field, and £400,000 rated central defender Paul Futchner on show to a number of first division representatives at the match.

To the dismay of the Rovers fans, who have twice seen their team surprisingly beaten in front of TV cameras this season, the match is the feature match on BBC TV's match of the Day tonight.

Rovers kicked off into the

THE GOALS:

ROUND (B'kburn) 69min
BROTHERSTON
(Blackburn) 85min

face of a light snow shower and it was obvious from the start that players on both sides were going to have the utmost difficulty remaining on their feet in ice rink conditions.

West and Hill, the Luton mid-field creators, had switched shirts with West wearing number eight and Hill number four.

The game was only a minute old when Hill had to receive treatment after a purely accidental crash with Keeley.

Players were slipping and sliding in all directions on the frost and snow which ran down the centre of the field.

When Rovers did get going Bailey pushed a speculative ball through to Hargreaves but the striker was unable to control it.

Then Hargreaves tried to put Waddington through but the ball ran away into the arms of Luton keeper Aleksic. Rovers were having slightly the better of the underfoot lottery and Metcalfe seemed to be the only player on the field to master the conditions.

It was 10 minutes before Rovers got in their first goal attempt. Metcalfe broke

77/78

ROVERS

Butcher

2 Hird 5 Keeley 6 Fazackerley 3 Bailey
4 Metcalfe 8 Waddington 10 Taylor
7 Brotherston 9 Hargreaves 11 Wagstaffe

11 Boersma 9 Futchner (R) 7 Husband
10 Fuccillo 8 Hill 4 West 3 Carr
6 Futchner (P) 5 Faulkner 2 Price
Aleksic

LUTON TOWN

Referee: C. L. Newsome, Broseley, Shropshire

through the middle, passed to Brotherston, took the return in his stride, but Aleksic was equal to the 20 yarder.

Hird and Brotherston combined well on the right, but again the conditions interfered in a good move and Luton came away through Carr.

Luton hit back and following a bad pass by Keeley, Hill was set up for a shot by Fuccillo, but blazed well over the bar from all of 35 yards.

Luton were getting more into the game and after Husband's long run ended when he lost control, Ron Futchner had a chance nine yards out, but he was unable to turn and fluffed his shot.

CLEARED

A long free-kick into the Luton box saw Keeley get in a back header, but the danger was cleared. Then Luton hit back for Ron Futchner to get in a cross, but Butcher was perfectly positioned.

Brotherston and Metcalfe split the Luton defence on the right, but Metcalfe was unable to keep his balance and put his angled shot wide.

Waddington, playing on right of midfield, robbed Husband on the edge of the Rovers penalty box and then Husband was spoken to by the referee for dissent after he had been penalised for dangerous kicking.

At the other end Wagstaffe looped over a high cross but Hargreaves was unable to control the ball.

A misplaced Fuccillo pass put Taylor away but the Luton man recovered and brought Taylor down 15 yards outside the box.

From the free kick Aleksic did well to catch the ball under pressure from Waddington.

Rovers had the ball in the net after 36 minutes but the goal was disallowed. Brotherston and Metcalfe split the Luton defence and Brotherston's deflected shot completely beat the Luton keeper but two Rovers players, Hargreaves and Taylor, were standing in off-side positions.

In the 40th minute the worst fears of most of the crowd and players were confirmed when Rovers big defender Keeley crashed into Fuccillo. The Luton mid-fielder was obviously very badly hurt and was stretched off. Keeley was deservedly booked for what was a bad foul made worse by the icy pitch.

Half time:

ROVERS 0 LUTON 0

The big surprise of the afternoon was when the game was allowed to go on after the interval. The only concession to the conditions was a heavy sanding of the Darwen end goalmouth. The Rovers had replaced Taylor with Round and Luton substitute Stein was on in place of the injured Fuccillo.

The opening minutes were ragged in the extreme and when Luton attacked Butcher easily collected a long-range cross shot.

The news from the Luton dressing-room was, happily, that Fuccillo was not thought to be badly injured, but had been taken to hospital for x-rays on a neck injury.

The big men were having terrible trouble keeping their feet and Hill won applause when he robbed Waddington with a slick back-heel.

Rovers broke away, but Paul Futchner was quickly into the tackle to rob Metcalfe as he was shaping to shoot.

Luton gradually got the upper hand and two chances fell to former Everton star Husband. His first shot went wide and then when Boersma crossed he volleyed over from the edge of the box.

Rovers came away in their most promising move of the match through the irrepressible Metcalfe whose pass sent Bailey down the left wing. Bailey's cross had the Luton defence in a terrible tangle but the ball caught the boot of Hargreaves and was deflected out to Waddington whose shot from the edge of the box was well saved by the diving Aleksic.

In the 69 minute the referee's decision to play the game that was completely vindicated in the eyes of the Rovers' fans.

Rovers went ahead after what was the best move of the match so far. The move involved Hird and Brotherston before Metcalfe put Bailey away down the left wing. Bailey's perfect cross swung away from goal and found the head of Round who rose high to put the ball inches over the stretching fingers of Aleksic.

Then, in the next minute Hargreaves had a golden chance but his shot on the turn lacked pace and Aleksic easily saved.

Again Rovers went further into the lead when BROTHSTON netted a brilliant individual effort from all of 30 yards. He latched on to a loose ball and seeing Aleksic a couple of yards off his line, flighted his shot into the top left hand corner of the net. It was a gem of a goal and although Aleksic got his fingers to the ball he could only help it into the net.

Final:-

ROVERS 2
LUTON TOWN 0

Weather

NORTH-WEST forecast for 24 hours from noon: Sunny spells, with scattered snow showers. Wind east, light or moderate, becoming north, fresh. Very cold, Max 0C.

OUTLOOK: Continuing very cold, with widespread frost and snow at times.

Light: 5.40pm-7.06am.
Sun rises 7.34; sets 5.11.



Luton's John Faulkner passes back to goalkeeper Melija Aleksic as Rovers' David Hargreaves closes in