

"CHANGE THE BALL."

Comedy in Luton's Match with Ton Pentre.

There was infinitely more fun than football on the Town ground on Saturday afternoon, when Luton were visited by the Ton Pentre team. The chief contributors were a little linesman, who cut quite a comical figure, and the match ball. The linesman was a "hero" from the outset, and seemed to tickle the crowd immensely, but, as the game advanced and the spectators called in vain upon the Blues to assert themselves in something approaching the style of a promotion winning team, attention was, for some reason or other, concentrated upon the innocent ball. In spite of the morning's heavy downpour there seemed to the onlooker nothing wrong with the pitch to account for the epidemic of miskicking which prevailed among both sets of players, almost without exception, and as the ball played some rather peculiar pranks when it came off the ground the crowd came to the conclusion that it was not true. Right through the half they were crying out for a change of ball, and a roar of cheering went up when one of the players lifted the offending sphere clean out of the field. The only effect of this, however, was to add to the comedy, for the Pentre men objected to the ball proffered as a substitute, and by the time the referee had finished testing the two change balls sent on, the offending one was back again. So the agitation continued, and groundsman Bygrave, in particular, waxed very warm on the subject. When half-time arrived "Jimmy" rushed out into the field, captured the ball, and submitted it to the referee for examination, and shook hands most effusively with that

official when he declared that there was nothing wrong with the ball. The crowd laughed hugely, but were still unconvinced, and the ball was the subject of a good deal of inspection behind the stand during the interval. The patches of mud on it certainly gave it a spinning appearance when in the air, but Bob Hawkes and all the players declared in favour of it, the miskicking and the pranks played by the ball being accounted for by the explanation that the pitch was more tricky than it looked.

With the afternoon clearing up beautifully after the morning's dull promise, there was a gathering of quite four thousand spectators to witness what was one of the duller games seen on the Town ground this season, in spite of the fact that the Blues had exactly the same team that waltzed round Llanelly the previous week. Ton Pentre went in for several changes in formation as well as an alteration of goalkeeper, the teams lining out under Mr. J. Lilley, the old Rushden back, being:

Luton:—Mitchell; Elvey and Robinson; Fred Hawkes, Frith and Bob Hawkes; Durrant, Brewis, Simms, Rollinson and Hoar.

Ton Pentre:—Percival; Kirtley, and Tamner; Curtis, Simpson, Chetwood; Roberts, Jones, Levi, McGregor and Reece.

The visitors surprised everyone by the brightness with which they opened up the game at the start. Their forwards developed the open game with lively dash, and soon had the home defence in trouble, and it might have made all the difference to the game if Levi had not been spoiled once just as he was about to shoot. As it was, their spurt fell away very quickly, and after twelve minutes, during which the visitors' goal had several narrow escapes from a series of four corners, Luton went ahead. The goal came from a beautiful run and centre by Hoar, following clever work by Bob Hawkes, Simms heading through in great style. Luton went down again strongly from the restart, and the crowd at the other end cheered for another goal when Rollinson hit the outside of the net with a gem of an effort. Rollinson continued to be prominent, and, twice smartly negotiating centres from Durrant, beat the goalkeeper with one of the efforts, but was ruled offside. He also had a beauty turned outside the post by Percival with a great effort, and was associated with Simms in a burst clean through the defence, only for the centre to be bundled off as he made his final effort.

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These were the only incidents of note until the last minute of a half which was on the whole deadly dull. The visitors were completely overplayed, and Mitchell was only tested once, but they were most effective in their spoiling work, and the Blues displayed such a lack of life that the crowd were frequently constrained to remind them that goals were necessary for promotion to be won. There was plenty of scrambling but precious little football, and it was quite refreshing when Simms and Brewis went right through the defence with a brilliant passing movement. They passed and repassed with such rapidity that the Welshmen were quite nonplussed, and dashing between the backs and goalkeeper Simms scored a fine goal from Brewis's final pass. Thus the half-time score was Luton 2, Ton Pentre 0.

In the second half the visitors had a much greater share in the exchanges, and displayed what little life and vim there was in the game. Fortunately for Luton, they showed little idea of markmanship, and were far from deadly near goal. About the only time Mitchell was troubled was by a cross shot from Levi, which passed across the goal untouched. Fred Hawkes, however, had a deal to do with the Welshmen's inability to get to close quarters, frequently coming to the homesters' rescue at critical times. Still, although the Blues' attack was more or less half-hearted had the greater number of "possibles," and the few incidents there were were about the Ton Pentre goal. Brewis twice skied over when excellently placed. Durrant cleverly beat the defence with a fine run down the wing, and seemed to have the goal at his mercy when an opponent dashed across and luckily diverted his shot, while Rollinson narrowly missed with a fine header from Durrant. Percival effected a magnificent full-length save from Bob Hawkes, and did brilliant work in getting away several lovely corners from Durrant, but he was very lucky in the last five minutes. Durrant got down the wing very fast, and beating two opponents bore close into goal. Percival came out, and simultaneously one of his colleagues dashed across and brought down Durrant, thus saving the situation with a corner. Jamie was so shaken that Brewis took the flag kick, and Rollinson headed in a beauty. Unfortunately for him Simms intervened, and as he was in an offside position the goal was not allowed, and the final result stood: Luton 2, Ton Pentre 0.

The Blues will have to show much better form if they are to make a creditable fight at Swansea. The forward work was poor and scratchy and entirely lacking in finish, Hoar and Rollinson being the only two to do themselves justice. Fred Hawkes was quite on his own in the rear divisions, although Robinson did many good things.