

LUTON ENTERTAIN NORTHAMPTON.

LUTON TOWN 1 goal

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LUTON TOWN. — Gibbon; Graham, Pearson; Foster, Jennings, Millar; Hoar, Green, Kerr, Hoten, Danskin.

NORTHAMPTON TOWN. — Smith; Watson, Brett; Newton, W. Wood, Williams; Pease, E. Wood, Lockett, Myers, L. Page.

Referee.—Mr. R. G. Rudd, Willesden.

It would be quite unfair to suggest that Northampton were deserving of anything less than what they got last night. It would be equally hard on the Town players to deny them their rights to a draw. On the run of the game Northampton got only what they deserved, but few were aware of the total extent of the difficulties under which the home team laboured. Many people were fretting over the comparative impotence of Danskin, but the fact of the matter was that his thigh broke down in the first half, and he was quite unable to do himself justice, and he did not play nearly so well as at Swansea in consequence of his injury. Then Graham was more badly crooked just before the interval than was imagined, and he had the courage of a Spartan to turn out in the second half.

Fortune has not favoured us in the kick-off this season, for, with Till unfit at the start, Tirrell injured on Saturday to such an extent that he could not be allowed to play last night, much as he desired, and Graham and Danskin likely to be in the accident ward, things have gone very badly for us. It was not known until yesterday afternoon that Tirrell could not play. He got his ankle hurt badly on Saturday, and it did not yield to treatment, so that Pearson was called upon to take his place.

After seeing the "Cobblers" in action, everybody will agree that we could ill-afford to lose the services of any of our best men, for the big, strong side, in which weight and science and youth and experience are blended to a nicety, will make any team in the country fight hard for victory. The game was not to be compared with that at Swansea for skilful football. From beginning to end it was a case of kick and rush, every man for himself, and fouls and punishments were plentiful. The "Cobblers" started like a side that intended to win, and the Town defence was badly shaken up on several occasions before the visitors opened the score. The defence was at fault in the first instance, but Lockett's goal was a fine effort and was characteristic of the opportunist.

It was some time before Luton got in a really dangerous attack, and then Hoten was trying to go between the backs, when he was badly sandwiched. The referee instantly awarded a penalty kick, and then Hoar advanced to take it we thought the equaliser was certain.

It wasn't. There was direction, but not enough strength behind the kick, and Smith saved with comparative ease.

There were chances at each end before the interval, but the visitors always appeared the more likely to score, because they went about their work with much more understanding than did the Town forwards. In this period we owed much to the hefty work of the Town middle men. They did not do much feeling, because they were working overtime on behalf of the defence. So the interval came with the "Cobblers" leading by the only goal scored.

It was feared that Graham would not be able to turn out in the second half, but he did, although he wore a big bandage on his knee, and could only use one foot for kicking purposes, and the other leg was shaking like a reed. Pearson, however, did splendid work, and never lost his head, and to him and the halves was credit due for keeping the visitors out. Luton woke up suddenly, and the Northampton goal had several narrow escapes, Danskin once sending the ball right across the goal-mouth for all three inside men to clean miss the goal with only Smith to beat. Only 12 minutes had elapsed from the interval when Danskin dropped the ball into goal again, and as Kerr went to head it he was deliberately pushed. A penalty kick was awarded, and Green was called upon to try his luck. There was no mistake about this. He crashed in a terrific shot Smith could hardly have seen, and the scores were levelled amidst tense excitement.

The visitors made strenuous efforts to regain the lead, but they could not beat Gibbon again, and Kerr and Green then burst away. The former passed at the right moment, and his colleague put in a tremendous shot that was only an inch or two above the cross-bar. It was a fine effort, and deserved success. The only other real thrill came shortly afterwards, when Lockett and Pearson had a race for the ball, with the odds apparently on the former. Pearson, however, managed to get there simultaneously, and to rob his opponent in brilliant fashion, to the plaudits of the crowd. It was a magnificent save.

Hoar, who had been the most active and reliable of the home forwards, continued his efforts to rally his colleagues into something like orderly attack, but the game ended with Northampton attacking, and well deserving of their partial success.

The Town's forward play was again a most disappointing feature. It was remarked to me after the game that it was easy to see that we had too many centre-forwards, and it was a trite comment. There was no organised attack, and no combination in its best sense. Dash and courage, and not a little individual cleverness and speed were manifest, but of scheme and of certainty of movement there was none. All were triers, but there was a lack of the guiding hand. Hoar was quite the best of the line.

The middle line worked like heroes, and Jennings must have thought more than once that he was playing in his own country again, so kind were the crowd. He deserved all the applause he got, and we saw once more something of the power we knew when he captained Merthyr against the Town. He was a great worker, and bore the brunt of the fray against a virile attack. Millar played much better than at Swansea, and as a "stopper" there was none superior. Now and then he showed that he could feed nicely too, and when he has learned to keep the ball down better he will be very difficult to displace from the position. Foster worked like a nigger from start to finish, and made up a stiff barrier. The deficiency of the line is apparent, and is shared by each unit—too much ball-in-the-air. In other respects they cannot be beaten by anything at the Town's disposal.

Graham was playing splendidly until he got hurt. He found his feet much quicker than on Saturday, and played with his head as well. Pearson looked slow in comparison, but the old 'Spur put up a sturdy game, and in the second half was as cool and judicious as anyone could wish—far more so than most of the players. Gibbon kept goal finely again, and could not be blamed in any way for the goal that was registered against him.

There were 10,000 spectators, and the game was full of excitement. Undoubtedly the players were handicapped by the effect the rain had upon the ball and the ground.

Mr. Rudd was not a perfect referee by any means, but considering the keen rivalry between the teams, he did well, keeping the players in hand and refusing to allow any rough play to pass without punishment.