

BEATEN BY BRENTFORD.

Luton Town Lose by an Odd Goal.

(By "CRUSADER.")

Brentford's winning difference on Saturday may be fairly summed up in the statement that their inside forwards were the better combination. That may be somewhat misleading in light of the fact that only one goal was scored, but that one point did not represent their superiority: there was a difference in defence to consider, and most of those who saw the game would agree that our defence was better than Brentford's. Time after time the home forwards came along in determined, almost irresistible fashion, and only the brave showing of the Town backs and goalkeeper prevented a big score.

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Under wretched conditions the game began with Brentford holding the advantage of the stiffish breeze which carried a cold rain, and as the Town players were slow in finding their bearings, Purdy soon got an opportunity of displaying his merit. Capital saves he made early on, and the ball was not far from the Town goal for several minutes. It was really wonderful how Purdy got the ball away on several occasions, and he had the faculty of getting in direct line with the marksman.

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When the Town did get away, however, the home goalkeeper had to run out, and in order to ~~avoid the attentions of the~~ Town forwards he carried the ball beyond the lawful area, and a free-kick resulted. Then there was another effort in which Miller gave to Shankly, who had hard luck with a great effort that skimmed the bar, and later, in another raid, Miller centred and Thompson tapped the ball into the net after it had touched one of the home defenders. The referee, who was hopelessly in arrear of the play, disallowed the goal for offside—a ludicrous decision, but pleasing to the Griffin Park crowd.

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Save for occasional raids, in which both Thompson and Miller provided centres that deserved goals, the Town players were kept in their own territory, and the defence often had a hard struggle to prevent a goal. Purdy was brilliant, and his backs and halves worked tremendously hard, and that was the main reason why the interval came with the score sheet still clean. It had been fast and keen play, but by no means a rough encounter.

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The second half began as the first, with the "Bees" the more aggressive, but the Town woke up and had a very big share of the game. Then some feeling crept in, there were several fouls, and the referee had a word or two with some of the players, but he was largely responsible, for he was giving some curious decisions, notably on offside. Many of these errors were due to the fact that the official was not in close touch with the play.

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Chances fell to both sides, but whereas Purdy was often severely tried, the home goalkeeper had not a lot of difficult stuff to deal with, and the narrowest escape of his goal was from a free-kick by Joe Till, the goalkeeper just managing to turn the ball round the post after diving at full length. The home forwards shot very much better, and Purdy brought off several splendid saves, while his backs cleared on two or three occasions when he had run out of goal to save, and the ball was returned quickly.

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Still the Town defence was playing well enough to make us feel that we were in for a draw. Ten minutes from the end a flag-kick fell to Brentford, and this was placed by Finlayson. LANE headed the ball direct for goal, and just when Purdy appeared to have the ball in safe keeping, a defending leg diverted the ball past him. The match was won then, for the efforts of the Town were met by a reinforced defence that gave nothing away.

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Purdy was magnificent in goal, some of his saves being well nigh miraculous. Graham was a great back, meeting a powerful wing, and he rendered invaluable service. After the early stages Till was nearly as good, and in the second half was great. There was not much to grumble about in the middle line, all playing stubbornly and resolutely. Richards had to make the best use of his physique to keep Finlayson and Douglas in check, and much the same may be said of Jennings, who was a tousled figure long before the interval. Dennis was not such a spoiler as the other two, but was better in assisting his forwards, some of his work with the left wing being very clever.

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The wing forwards were splendid, and had a reasonable proportion of their centres been converted the Town would have got both points and a much better goal average. Both did well. The inside forwards did not come up to their best, however, for Shankly was not nearly so good as is his wont, and it was only at rare intervals that he gave glimpses of his best. Both Littlewood and Miller suffered through this, but the former had two or three fine chances that he should have turned to account. Norman Thomson showed his artistry as usual, and he gave Thompson some beautiful passes, but he was not in shooting trim.

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This was Brentford's fourth consecutive victory after having failed to win one of their first ten games. It will do them a lot of good. They have quite a good side, and it was not easy to see why they had failed so often, but they have a much different team from that starting the season.

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In Thomson they have a lithe, "safe" goalkeeper. I quote that word "safe," because he appears to be a "safety first" player, and one magnificent save he made from Joe Till's free-kick. The backs were hard kickers, and McClennon quite a clever youngster, but they were not sufficiently harassed by the Town forwards. Alec Graham is still a great centre-half, and in Walton and Rae had two useful assistants.

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Lane, who was practically a gift from Chesterfield last season, is the cleverest forward, a great worker, vigorous, and thoughtful, and Pat Hendren played almost as well at outside-right as on the other extreme. Douglas opened in bright style, but both he and Finlayson had enough of Richards before the end. I have always had a liking for Whitton, and have seen him play at back, centre-half, wing half, and centre-forward, and he is a good man in any line.

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The referee, it appeared to me, was quite wrong in disallowing Thompson's goal, and there was another incident which, to my mind, called for intervention. A minute from the end of the game a free-kick was given against the "Bees." Richards hurried to take it, and Rae, who had the ball, deliberately took it away from him. When Richards went after him he back-heeled to Finlayson, and when the Town half-back went to the latter he also deliberately kicked the ball away. Yet Mr. Grinstead took no action at all except to whistle for time immediately the free-kick was taken.