

LUTON TOWN IMPROVE

Hard-Earned Victory Over Norwich City.

(By "CRUSADER.")

NORWICH CITY came to Luton on Saturday with no small degree of confidence. They felt that, having taken seven points of a possible eight, and having conquered Reading as the latest feat, they might well expect to take the points from Luton—an achievement they had been trying ever since the war. They were mistaken, for a stern struggle ended in Luton winning by the odd goal in five.

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After the game there was some little sympathy with the visitors, but, as one of the Town players said after the match, they were welcome to the sympathy if they left the points behind. It could not be said that they deserved more than they got, for the Town were the better side on the run of the play as a whole, and the City's best showing came when there was a tendency on the part of the Town to take things too comfortably.

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There is one man in a team that cannot afford to take liberties, and that is the goalkeeper, and it would have been interesting to analyse Purdy's thoughts during the hectic period in the second half when the Town defenders were slackening the tight rein they had applied to the visiting forwards previously. Three goals in twenty minutes was the measure of the Town's superiority, and up to the interval there was no suggestion that the second half would not find the Town just as much on top, but after the change of ends there was a perceptible change, and with one or two exceptions the Town players appeared to be convinced that the game was won.

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What a shock they got! Jackson took advantage of two good chances, and only a goal separated the scores when the third half-hour was begun. It was a fierce conflict to the end, but the Town managed to retain their lead, and many in a good position to see held that they improved it in the last minute, because Shankly was believed to have got the ball over the line following a scrimmage with Dennington right on the goal line. The referee, however, who was not in a good position, thought otherwise, and so the odd goal was all that enabled the Town to claim the spoils.

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They began happily, THOMPSON taking a pass from Littlewood and going through to score a fine goal a minute after the game began. Ten minutes later LITTLEWOOD was successful following a flag-kick, and MILLER got the third consequent upon a centre from Thompson, and the game was then only twenty minutes old.

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The most conspicuous figure afterwards was Dennington, who kept goal in brilliant fashion, especially during a warm assault in the second half, following the successes of Jackson, who found the correct billet with a couple of splendid shots. It was in the last quarter of an hour that Norwich made the most desperate efforts to draw level, and they came very near to it. Purdy's goal had three or four narrow escapes, notably when on two occasions he was out of goal—the ball going over once and past the upright on the other occasion. Because of this Norwich were disposed to feel that Fortune had played them false, but really the trouble was with their defence.

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Had the Norwich defence been as capable as the attack the visitors would not have been defeated. Their forward line was not far short of the best seen at Luton this season. The combination was of a swinging rhythmic character, every forward carried weight as well as speed, and the game was more vigorous than usual. Banks was the schemer of the line, but every man did well. In the middle and back divisions there was none exceptionally clever, but Dennington again proved a goalkeeper of the very highest quality.

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The Town defence was the better, and but for growing careless in the second half there would not have been two goals scored against them. Purdy was not to blame in any way, although he took risks that were not always appreciated by the spectators. Some of his saves were very clever, and evoked much applause. Till played a fine game at back, and Graham was not far behind in point of cleverness. What we all like about the pair of them now is the frequent big kick that puts the forwards in possession before the opposing defenders have time to prepare.

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The middle line had one of the toughest jobs of the season, for they had to cope with robust methods as well as with cleverness, and they were successful until the interval. Their hardest work came afterwards, when Norwich were not content with having scored twice, and I should imagine that both Jennings and Millar were grateful for the helping hand of George Dennis during these hard times. The inside left played the part of half-back and inside forward, and rendered valuable help when the three stalwarts were in danger of being overwhelmed.

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The forwards, though not a fascinating combination, played hard, fast football, and the persistence in keeping right on top of the visiting backs was responsible for their early successes. Many chances were missed by the inside forwards afterwards, but the line deserves to be persevered with. We all hope Littlewood will continue to show improvement. He is apt to get out of position, and would do better to remain in the centre of the field. On two or three occasions he fell into the error of running towards the colleague in possession, and the ball beat him when it came along. He will get more chances if he positions better, especially for Jim Thompson's passes, which never err on the side of weakness.

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Shankly suffers a different blemish, for he is inclined to run towards the player to whom he is about to pass, and that gives the other man too little room to operate. This fault remedied, and Shankly is a great player, and Miller's efficiency increased fifty per cent. The outside man requires more space for his operations, and, given it, he will do a lot of damage. He played well both before and after his injury on Saturday, but his ankle was in a terrible state after the game.

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Dennis played a splendid game, for he co-operated cleverly with Millar and Thompson. He has not the fine touches of Norman Thomson, but he works tremendously hard, and in this game he was a splendid partner for Thompson, and a great trouble to the visiting defence and attack alike. Thompson again played well at outside left, and most of us will be surprised if he does not hold the position throughout the season. If he is moved I fancy it will be because he is wanted elsewhere in the attack.

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It was a rousing game, as good as a Cup-tie, and it augurs well for the future.

LUTON TOWN 3 goals

NORWICH CITY 2 ..

LUTON.—Purdy; Till, Graham; Richards, Jennings, Millar; Miller, Shankly, Littlewood, Dennis, Thompson.

NORWICH.—Dennington; Hannah, Wingham; Bradbrook, Murphy, Duffus; McKinney, Rogers, Jackson, Banks, Stoakes.

Referee: Mr. P. A. Hall, London.