

Crusader Comments.

Luton's Victory Over Southend

ALTHOUGH Luton Town's success at the expense of Southend United was not as convincing as supporters would have liked, it was none the less welcome, and there was a suggestion of better things in the general play. This was Southend's first defeat, and as they had succeeded in winning at Brighton and bringing a point from Bournemouth, there was a fair degree of merit in the victory.

There was no score until after the interval, and the three goals that counted may be dealt with at once. Yardley got the first with his head from a centre by M'Nestry. I don't know if Jimmy can remember when he last scored a goal with his head, but it must be a considerable time ago. Anyway, he deserved the honour, for he was the liveliest of the inside forwards.

Within a couple of minutes CLARK had scored the second with a characteristic shot. Two of his free-kicks earlier had been of no avail, having been met by a barrier of opponents, but in this instance, following a neat run by M'Nestry, the ball had been kicked out of the goal-mouth, and Rennie tried without success to retrieve it. Seeing the centre-half in a much better position he tapped it to him, and the ball flashed high up into the net at tremendous speed.

Southend's goal came through the thrustfulness of Shankly. There had been one or two scuffles in the Town goal-mouth, and a corner-kick or two had caused difficulty, but the danger seemed to have been avoided, when Williams suddenly drove in a ball with his right foot, and there was such speed and swerve on the slippery ball that Banes could not quite hold it at the first attempt. As he caught it a second time SHANKLY and Jones caught him, and, with the ball in his possession, he was toppled into the back of the net.

There was another goal scored, too, I feel sure, and I believe the spectators at the Kenilworth-road end would agree. They certainly made a loud protest when the referee refused to allow it. Rennie got hold of a return and, with a fine shot, had Moore well beaten; the ball struck the underside of the bar and fell behind the goalkeeper, but he turned promptly and knocked it clear. I thought it was well over the line, but Mr. Rudd was not convinced, and so play was allowed to proceed.

The United had the better of the play in the opening stages, and their superiority seemed so pronounced that we were distinctly unsettled, and thought

they were going to make short work of their task. Banes and his backs did wonderful work when the halves could not get going, and though there were enough narrow escapes to satisfy anybody, there was no goal, and the Town began to take a more lively interest in Moore's charge.

I doubt if there has been better goal-keeping in any match on the Town ground for a long, long time than was shown by Banes and Moore. Both had a fair amount of work, but it was not so much the quantity as the quality that raised the thrill and aroused the fears of supporters of either side. Banes was expert in getting down to shots that were stealing in close to the post, and Moore was at home to shots that were going hard and high.

The defenders were well matched, but the Town's had the more gruelling time, for the United's attacks invariably came through whole-line movements, whereas the Town usually made headway by speed on either wing. The visitors were very quick on the ball, and their positional play was good. The Town had nothing like an equal understanding in any department except, perhaps, the back division.

Now and then the tactics were varied, and the United forsook short passing for the wing to wing play, but always Shankly and Bailey were somewhere on the premises ready for a dash through, and it was well for the Town goal average that Kingham and Richards kept a strict hold on the mercurial Shankly. While Jones was very tricky, and especially good in initiation, Shankly was the strong man in front of goal, and the Town backs realised that.

The United halves were better in the opening stages than later, but Donovan was always a tireless and brainy factor in defence and attack, and M'Nestry was not so successful against him as he has been against others. Wand and Dixon were not consistent, but both played well up to their forwards, and gave some nice passes. In the rear Robinson was a sterling little defender, and French was ponderous, but very useful, while Moore could not have been surpassed by any goalkeeper.

There is still a lack of cohesion in the Town team. It does not matter much whether goals come by means of finesse or through methods, so long as they come, but the team was not a good machine. The defence was very hard worked, but all three were big-hearted and never shirked trouble. The middle line was as clever as Southend's, without being as

quick in tackling, and all three need sharpening up. I like Muir the best, for he was not averse to getting in when necessary, and his initiation was very good.

McGinnigle was slow in divining the intentions of the opposition, and often was left. In possession he was A1, but must grasp the fact that opponents cannot be allowed a minute's peace. I should not hesitate to give either McGinnigle or Miller a place in the attack if I thought they could shoot well, because both are so neat in footwork and in passing, but speed, speed, speed is the big demand for halves as well as forwards in English football. Clark showed up more prominently than in other games, and gives promise of coming right back to his best, though he has still some way to go before he touches the masterfulness of his best period last season.

Yardley has many critics, and he does not get his share of praise from the followers, but none could deny that he was the most conspicuous figure in the forward line in this game. He tried to do a little too much now and then, perhaps, but he was always a willing horse, and he harassed the defenders continually; while his employment of Slicer suggested that he would be better at inside left than in his customary position.

Slicer's play was improved in consequence, and though there were one or two occasions when he might have gone ahead with more promptitude, he was too fast for the opposition when he got the right pass, and centred accurately. M'Nestry was not so well worked as usual, especially in the first half, but always proved a dangerous customer when on the move, and if he could have shot with more accuracy he would have had a hat-trick to his account.

Bryce again worked pluckily and untiringly, and was a trouble to the United defence, but it is clear that he is not an ideal inside forward. A great trier, however, he has many friends among the crowd. Rennie did not get enough work, and was not so often in the picture as on Monday night. The new players have not yet become used to the sort of pass Rennie requires, and so he is not getting goals.

LUTON.—Banes; Kingham, Richards; McGinnigle, Clark, Muir; M'Nestry, Bryce, Rennie, Yardley, Slicer.

SOUTHEND.—Moore; French, Robinson; Dixon, Ward, Donovan; Barnett, Jones, Shankly, Bailey, Williams.

Referee: Mr. R. G. Rudd, Kenton.

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