

Crusader Comments

ON LUTON TOWN'S BEST PERFORMANCE.

"WHY should we have to travel over seventy miles to see the Town's best game?" asked a supporter who made the journey to Swindon on Saturday. The only answer I could give was that they had seen the best team the Town have turned out this season. I am not sure that I would not like to make further changes, but for real team spirit and whole-heartedness this eleven proved the best to date. It was a game that should have been won comfortably, and if the finishing had been up to the level of the general work the result would have staggered not only Swindon followers, but those of Luton.

Andy Rennie mournfully remarked after the game that he had hitherto thought he had slain a black cat, but now he felt that he had slaughtered a whole tribe. He had good reason. In no game this season has he had so many chances, and he has not in all his experience missed so many. Nor was he the only defaulter; others in the line had quite easy openings, only to fail in marksmanship. Swindon were no better, but they did not get anything like the opportunities, for the simple reason that they could not make them.

For the first time this season the defence was not penetrated, and while in no way belittling the magnificent game of the rearguard, I believe that the first element in that success was the vast improvement in the middle line. Gale gave a great display, and if he can hold a player of the quality of Morris there is no reason why he should not be able to hold his own in any game. Then there was the return of Fraser, who was probably the most effective player on the field. These two brought the intermediate line nearer to the standard we expect.

Morris, who travelled with us on both journeys, and who is a really good fellow, paid the team the compliment of saying they were the best that Swindon had met this season, and Frank Richardson, his colleague, endorsed the remark. None could speak with more feeling, for in six home games the Swindon team had scored twenty goals, and in this latest they had been reduced to impotence not by the slap-dash methods too common in Third Division football, but by sheer skill. It was almost a triumph for the Town halves and backs, especially as they played the ball far more consistently than did the Swindon halves.

Swindon's confident opening gave the Town defence a stiff test, but within a few minutes Morris and company found that they were up against a dour and skilful opposition, and the home rearguard found their troubles increasing as the game wore on. The Town had a little the better of the opening half, and their opportunities were better and more often, but the old fault of poor marksmanship prevented them realising a lead. Banes had about as much work as Cope, and one thrilling save was effected when he rushed out and dived on to the ball just as Morris was on the point of shooting from six yards' range. The crowd generously applauded him, as they also

did a wonderful back-heel by Hodgson that broke a very hot assault.

Twice Cope knocked the ball down only a few feet from the goal-mouth, but there was no one up to take advantage of this. On another occasion Rennie dashed clean through, and we expected one of his express shots to beat Cope, but the ball flew high and wide. Bryce was heavily floored after a capital dribble that outwitted the defence, but the appeal for a penalty was negatived.

Swindon were not quite so sure in the second half, and before the game was very old they had to defend desperately. In the first half-hour Morris had one chance, but he was compelled to shoot hurriedly, and the ball hit the side net. On the other hand M'Nestry and Bryce centred into the home goal-mouth time after time, but Rennie could not find the right spot, even when he had only Cope to beat. Once he got the ball past the custodian, but it stuck on the goal line until Batty kicked away.

Batty thrice in this half saved when his goalkeeper was well beaten, and shots from M'Nestry, Bryce, Dent, Rennie, Fraser and Yardley flashed past within inches of the upright. Cope had a lot of good fortune, but he should have been beaten several times. Only in the late stages did the Swindon attack become consistently dangerous, but shots were few and far between, and when they came Banes was safe.

The Town goalkeeper was well served by Kingham and Hodgson. The former seldom has played better, his tackling being clever and performed with a celerity that disconcerted his opponents. He covered an immense amount of ground, as did Hodgson, and those who thought that the latter was on the slow side should mend their views. His positioning was splendid, and the manner in which each covered the other was noteworthy.

Their understanding with the line in front also contributed in no small measure to the partial eclipse of the Swindon forwards. Here again in the sharp tackling, the relentless challenging of the man in possession, and the support for the attack, I have referred to Gale and Fraser, and Clark completed a sound and vigorous, though fair line.

In their constructive work the attack was almost all that could be desired. Dent again playing a brilliant game, and making Bryce as prominent as any winger on view. Yardley was not so successful, but gave M'Nestry some nice passes in the second half, and in this respect Rennie was also at his best, though all five left much wanting in marksmanship.

SWINDON TOWN 0
LUTON TOWN 0

SWINDON. — Cope; Batty, Girvan; Rushton, Cockburn, Braithwaite; Munings, Eddleston, Morris, Richardson, Kirby.

LUTON. — Banes; Kingham, Hodgson; Clark, Gale, Fraser; M'Nestry, Yardley, Rennie, Dent, Bryce.

Referee: Mr. T. Chamberlain, Ilford.