

Crusader Comments

ON THE LUCK OF NOTTS COUNTY.

WELL, we had no reason to be ashamed of the game at Nottingham, and it may be emphasised very strongly that Notts County were the luckiest side we have met this season. It is true that they had to field substitutes for Froggatt and Kemp, but it must not be overlooked that the Town were making a whole series of changes, and they were not in so happy a position as the County in regard to players. The Town team rose to the occasion magnificently, and without any quibble or question, they should have won handsomely on an analysis of the opportunities.

The most disappointing features from my point of view were: firstly, the inability of the Town to reap the reward of skilful approach work, for as often as the Town halves and backs mastered the County forwards, the Town forwards overcame the opposition up to a point; secondly, the grudging attitude of the County spectators to see anything but poor play by the County halves and forwards. For my part, while recognising that the County failed often in their intentions, the main failure was simply because they could not cast off the grip the Town halves had on the game from the start. It was not so much the bad play of the County, but the determination and the skill of the Town halves, and I have never been so sick in any game since the War as I was of the running "grouse" maintained by two or three neighbours of mine. It seemed to me that the County supporters were living in the past, and were of the opinion that the County's return to the Second Division was only a matter of playing games in the Third Division for a season.

Quite candidly, I do not think the County can win the championship unless they have a team capable of playing a hundred per cent. better than this team played, and their position as leaders is false if they have not played that much better to get there. Their game was not comparable with that of the Town; there was neither equal understanding nor equal skill in keeping the ball on the move, and only at rare intervals did they extend the Town defence in anything like the manner their own rearguard sustained pressure. The proportion of shooting chances to the Town was at least four or five to one, but the Town did not finish well at all—not a member of the line but missed one or more chances. I was pleased with the Town in everything except this one respect, and if only the deficiency could be overcome, we should have a consistently successful side.

The only goal of the game was scored just under ten minutes after the interval, and it was a case of FENNER, the County inside right, profiting by a fortuitous incident. There seemed no danger when Hodgson held up Haden, and got the ball, but as he started to make ground with it he trod on it, and lost his balance. It was either McGinnigle or Gale that just failed to get it then before Haden swung it in front of goal,

where none of the Town defenders expected it, and Fenner dashed in and got to the ball a fraction of a second before Harford and Smith, and the goal was easy. After that, the County played much better, and Harford had more work, but it was not very exacting. On the other hand, the Town had been masters for the whole of the first half, and before the end they should have been well in front. Everywhere except in shooting they had the advantage, and were the better side.

The ball was kept on the move better than ever before, I think, and the free, swinging passes from the halves to the wings, thence to the centre, and back again from Rennie, had the home halves chasing a will-o'-the-wisp, and but for a very sound display by Mills and Bisby, the defence would have been riddled. In the first half the best shot came from Armstrong, and he was very unlucky to see the ball, travelling under a full head of energy, nearly knock Rennie off his feet, when Ferguson would probably have seen nothing of it until it was in the net. There were other chances, but a strange indisposition to shoot.

In the second half there was more shooting by all the forwards and the halves, and the Town should have scored several times. Ferguson made a wonderful save at full length from Rennie when the latter took a free kick after Gale had been tripped on the edge of the penalty area following a splendid solo effort. Again the goalkeeper saved in extraordinary fashion when Rennie headed in, from almost under the bar, a splendid centre by M'Nestry, and the latter had wretched luck after racing through the defence, for a terrific shot beat the goalkeeper all the way, hit the bar, and went over.

There remains little more to be said. Harford did his work well, though he once dropped the ball when tackled close in goal. In the first half he made one great save by grabbing the ball off the feet of opponents who had closed in from the right. Hodgson and Smith were a sound pair, and they were not worked in anything like the manner of the home backs, thanks to the skilful and resolute play of the middle-men. Fraser was near his best again; McGinnigle played finely after taking five minutes to settle down, and Gale again gave a really magnificent exhibition. The work of the attack was all right except in front of goal, and here there was too much reliance on Rennie, perhaps. Armstrong and Brown were clever in the initiation, and the other three carried on to good purpose. There were 10,308 spectators.

NOTTS COUNTY	1
LUTON TOWN	nil
NOTTS. — Ferguson; Mills; Bisby; Dowsey, Smith, Jakeman; Fenner, Shooter, Maw, Haden.	Taylor,
LUTON.—Harford; Hodgson, Smith; Gale, McGinnigle, Fraser; M'Nestry, Armstrong, Rennie, Brown, Bryce.	
Referee.—Mr. T. J. Botham, Walsall.	