

Crusader Comments

ON 'WHAT MIGHT HAVE BEEN'

AT LUTON on Christmas Day:—
LUTON TOWN 3
TORQUAY UNITED 1
Scorers for Luton:—RENNIE (2),
BRYCE.

For Torquay:—HILL.
LUTON.—Harford; Hodgson, Smith;
Gale, McGinnigle, Fraser; Slicer,
M'Nestry, Rennie, Dent, Bryce.
TORQUAY.—Wright (Jos.); Wright
(Jas.), Fowler; Phoenix, Hill, Smith;
Birkett, Clayson, Fisher, Hutchinson,
Waller.
Referee.—Mr. A. J. Spittle, Graves-
end.

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AT TORQUAY on Boxing Day:—
TORQUAY UNITED 1
LUTON TOWN 1
Scorer for Luton:—ARMSTRONG.
For Torquay:—HUTCHINSON.
TORQUAY.—Wright (Jos.); Fowler,
Hill; Freer, Butler, Smith; Birkett,
Clayson, Trotter, Hutchinson, Waller.
LUTON.—Harford; Hodgson, Smith;
Gale, McGinnigle, Fraser; M'Nestry,
Armstrong, Rennie, Yardley, Bryce.
Referee.—Mr. A. J. Spittle, Graves-
end.

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AT BRENTFORD on Saturday:—
LUTON TOWN 1
BRENTFORD nil
Scorer:—CLARK.
BRENTFORD.—Fox; Stevenson, Adam-
son; Lawson, Bain, Salt; Foster, Lane
(J.), Lane (W.), Blakemore, Berry.
LUTON.—Harford; Kingham, Hodg-
son; Fraser, Clark, Smith; M'Nestry,
Armstrong, Rennie, Yardley, Bryce.
Referee.—Mr. T. J. Botham, Walsall.

* * *
LUTON TOWN wound up the old year
in something akin to a blaze of glory.
Taking five points of a possible six, two
of the three games being played away,
was a feat they have not equalled for
years. They reached their very best at
Brentford on Saturday, for, in view of
the conditions, and the burden of their
games on the two previous days involv-
ing 500 miles' travelling, there seemed
little possibility of victory. Had Luton
played all the season as they played at
Brentford, Notts. County would not now
have been heading the League table.
Brentford played fine, vigorous football,
and on Christmas Day had trounced
Crystal Palace to the tune of eight goals
to two, but in this game the skilful
methods of the Town in defence and
attack were far superior, and won the
commendation of all at Griffin Park.

* * *
"What might have been"—well, if
there is not time to overtake the League
leaders, there is time to realise a far
better position in the League, and bring
the crowd back to the Town ground, and
if the football is at the level of the
game at Griffin Park, then the New Year
will be much more prosperous than the
first half of the season. In another
column I hope to give a summary of
the first half of the season, but I want
to say here that the defence has been
remarkably fine recently, and in the last
ten League games has conceded only
seven goals, against 28 conceded in the
first twelve games. Few teams can show
a better record, and it has meant the
stiffening of the whole team.

* * *
THE game at Luton on Christmas Day
was not indicative of the Christ-
mas spirit, for Torquay showed fighting
mood and energy that led to a good
deal of unpleasantness, and the referee
did not show the necessary ability to
keep it down. The Town were the
cleverer team, and had the better of
the exchanges, but the United scored
first—a well-deserved goal by reason of
the opportunism of DICK HILL, the old
Millwall back, who was playing finely
at centre-half. Following a corner kick,
the ball came well out, and he took it
on the run and crashed home a great
shot that struck the under side of the
bar and went into the net.

* * *
The Town made fierce attacks, and
these were interspersed by speedy raids
by the visiting wingers. However, the
Town equalised after RENNIE had taken
a pass from M'Nestry, though I thought
the latter handled before delivering the
ball. Dent also got the ball into the
net and was given offside wrongly, for
there was an opponent nearer the line
as well as the goalkeeper, but the
referee did not see him. Fine saves were
made by Joe Wright, and the interval
found the scores level.

* * *
In the second half Torquay booted
the ball about a lot, and the Town were
trying to keep to methodical football.
Harford had a good deal to do, and
made some fine saves before the Town
took the lead. Wright was again in
evidence with magnificent work, but was
beaten by RENNIE when Dent slipped
the ball between the backs and enabled
the centre-forward to nip in and score
at will. A little while afterwards,
BRYCE scored with a surprise shot, and
that virtually settled the issue even
then, for the Town defence was safe.

* * *
I COULD not go to Torquay on Boxing
Day, and so had to rely upon the
report from that end. I am told that
it did not do justice to the superiority
of the Town. The game was again on
the rough side, for two or three players
were spoken to, and Fowler, who had
been the worst offender on the previous
day, had his name taken. There were
only two goals scored, and these fell
to HUTCHINSON for Torquay, and
ARMSTRONG for Luton, both before
half-time.

* * *
The Town, however, had the ball in
the net three times, and Armstrong was
the marksman on each occasion. He
was given offside twice, but the Town
players held that one goal was certainly
legitimate and should have been allowed.
M'Nestry also hit the bar, and Bryce
and Yardley several times came near
scoring. The inclusion of Butler, the
ex-Arsenal centre-half, and Trotter, the
former Sheffield Wednesday forward, it
was thought, would enable the United
to pull off the victory, but they found
the Town in better form than on
Christmas Day, and both points should
have come to Luton.

* * *
AT Griffin Park on Saturday, the
Town played a splendid game—
something like their best, and but for
the sound work of the home defence,
they would have won by a bigger mar-
gin. The game was one of the best the
teams have played, there being a mini-
mum of rough play, and although con-
ditions were none too good, the Town
showed better footwork and co-operation
than Brentford, and with Rennie shoot-

ing finely, and the forwards and halves
playing nicely together, the general
work was always better than that of the
"Bees."

* * *
The pace at which the Town began
surprised the opposition, and although
the forwards were foiled when in the
act of shooting two or three times,
Fraser and Clark got in a couple of long
shots that tested Fox. Rennie and
M'Nestry were given offside when nice
movements had beaten the defence.
Then the "Bees" made trouble, and
the Town had plenty to do to keep out
the two Lanes and Blakemore, who were
very determined.

* * *
Fine understanding between backs
and halves counted for a good deal, and
Harford had plenty of time in which to
position for any shot, and those that
came were usually from long range.
There was nothing among the home
team's efforts to compare with a lovely
shot by Rennie after he had taken ad-
vantage of a miskick by Stevenson, but
Fox brought off a wonderful save at
full length. Then M'Nestry only just
failed to register from a centre by Bryce,
and a centre from M'Nestry went beg-
ging with a gift waiting for any forward
who had happened to be on the spot.

* * *
The "Bees" got over a lively five
minutes in the second half, and then
asserted pressure, but Kingham and
Hodgson and the halves were in rare
fettle, and Harford had nothing serious
to do. Time after time the home for-
wards came along with sweeping passes
or individual thrusts, but always one or
other of the Town defenders stepped
in just when the attack threatened to
be critical, and the danger was relieved.

* * *
The continual repulses seemed to take
the steam out of the home forwards, and
then the Town got going, and for the
rest of the game they were much the
better side. Rennie once put in a daz-
zling drive, but again Fox made a mar-
vellous save, leaping across to touch the
ball just enough to see it diverted
on to the bar, whence it went out to
the right, and although there was a
scuffle in the home goal area, the ball
was got away.

* * *
With about fifteen minutes to go the
Town rose to real brilliance, and their
forwards baffled the home halves con-
sistently with clever footwork, and Fox
made many saves. It was left to Clark,
however, to cap a glorious display with
a fine goal, and it was the fitting reward
to individual, as well as to team, merit.
Clark had been in the picture several
times with strong shots, and after Fox
had made one good save on his knees,
and another close to the post, CLARK
got hold just outside the penalty area
and shot hard and true, and the ball
travelled to the farther corner of the
net, with Fox diving at full length a
couple of yards short, and much too late
to get near the ball.

* * *
The closing stages found Brentford
again desperately fighting for a goal, but
all to no purpose, and twice the Town
came near to adding to their lead,
Bryce bringing Fox down at full length
again, and Rennie and Yardley banging
the ball within inches of the upright.
The whistle found the Town deservedly
successful.

* * *
COMMENTS.
IN the game on Christmas Day, Harford
had more to do than in either of the two
succeeding games, and he did his work
well, though he did not always capture
the ball cleanly or get it away quickly.
Still, he is playing with more confidence,
and had his share in the success. It
mattered not whether it was Kingham
and Hodgson or Hodgson and Smith, the
backs were powerful and safe, and
Hodgson has infused a lot of confidence
in the team by his cool and skilful
methods. Kingham was in great form
at Brentford.

* * *
Gale played magnificently in the first
and second games, and has conclusively
proved his title to a place in the first
eleven. It was deemed advisable to rest
him at Griffin Park, and with happy
results, to the extent that Smith was
discovered to have qualifications for a
half-back in emergency. He did remark-
ably well at left half against such a
formidable wing as Jack Lane and
Foster. McGinnigle also maintained his
improvement in the first two games,
and was unfortunate to be injured at
Torquay. Fraser played in all three
games, and though under a handicap
on Saturday, being crippled at Torquay,
he was as clever as usual, and, perhaps,
less prone to hold on too long. The
feature of the half-back play in the
holidays has been that of Gale, and on
Saturday, that of Clark, who gave a
wonderful exhibition against the "Bees."
In every respect he was the master of
the middle field, and a great service to
defence and attack alike.

* * *
On Christmas Day the experiment
was tried of Slicer at outside right, but
it was not a success, and after an hour
he and Bryce changed places, when
Slicer showed up much better. Bryce
played grandly in all three games, and
his courage and resolution are great
assets. He is one of the most popular
lads we have had for years, and that
speaks for players and supporters too.
M'Nestry again proved his worth, and
that the wing is his best position. He
does better there, though by no means
a failure at inside right on Christmas
Day, for his unorthodox movements
puzzled the opposition.

* * *
Armstrong seems to have come into
his own. At Torquay, it is said, he was
the brainiest forward on field, and it
was so at Brentford. His judicious
passes, the result of ability to "kill"
the ball immediately, means so much to
his colleagues, and now that he has got
among the goal-scorers we may look for
his rise in this direction, for he carries
a wallop in either foot. Yardley also
played finely at Torquay and Brentford,
and in the latter game was always doing
useful work. Rennie was more like his
old self, though he had little luck with
his marksmanship, in spite of really
clever shooting. Both Wright, the Tor-
quay custodian, and Fox, of Brentford,
could testify to the power behind balls
from Rennie's boot, and no less to their
own good fortune.

LUTON AMATEURS WIN