

Crusader Comments

ON THE FALL OF GILLINGHAM.

LITTLE fault was found with Luton Town after they had accounted for Gillingham on Saturday, though there were uneasy moments during the game. The visitors lived up to their reputation as a side willing to hand out as much vigour as the referee would permit, and as much as their opponents could take, and now and then there were a few unpleasant exchanges. The referee found it necessary to rebuke two or three players, but in the end there was not much damage.

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The Town played much the better football; they had nicer conception of the conditions, were neater in control, in combination, and their team work showed a better appreciation of the route to goal. Quicker on the ball than the visitors, they were apt to hold on when a quick pass would have simplified approach, and in this way contributed to the generally successful offside tactics adopted by the Gillingham backs. Still, they had a considerable margin of skill in their favour, and there could be no question as to the merits of their victory.

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The Town led by two goals at the interval and these were deserved on the run of the play. Gillingham gave a good deal of trouble in the early stages, and the Town backs were hard worked, even though Harford was not called upon to exert himself a great deal. Kingham and Hodgson were generally able to foil attempts to get to close quarters, and when the Town began to find their feet on the chopped surface, the Gillingham defenders had no lack of opportunity to shine.

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First blood came from a penalty kick, a just award, for, as Yardley, close in, was attempting to divert into the net a swinging pass from Fraser, someone—Collins, I believe—roughly pushed him away, and the ball fell harmlessly in the rear of the centre-forward. The referee was on the spot, and pointed without hesitation to the penalty spot. RENNIE'S drive was successful.

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There was a little flutter by the visitors, White and French being persistent, but they were frustrated, and the ball was taken to the other end. The crowd behind the goal wanted another penalty kick when McGregor got away a centre from Slicer, but the referee would not agree that the full back used his hands. The Town worried the Gillingham defence constantly, however, and when a defender sent the ball back to Rutherford he did not reckon on a quick sprint by M'Nestry, and the goalkeeper had to knock the ball behind for a corner kick. Heslop placed this well, and M'NESTRY leaped high and nodded the ball into the net—a brilliant effort.

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In the remaining play before the change of ends, the Town were the better side, and several times came very near scoring, the inside forwards shooting well. Gillingham made raids, chiefly by the use of the wingers, though White was ever a dangerous customer. Just before the change of ends a corner kick was earned by the Town, but Heslop sent the ball behind. Still, it was a good lead at the interval.

LUTON	2
GILLINGHAM	0

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Very fine work by the Town wingers, especially Heslop, marked the opening stages of the second period, and Rutherford was in action within a few seconds of the kick-off. He saved splendidly, and Yardley twice was within an ace of adding to the account. It was not to be, and the visitors gradually began to pull together, and Harford had one or two shots to deal with, though nothing very serious, thanks to the covering work of his backs.

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There were warm scenes round the Gillingham goal, but the defenders worked strenuously, and play was transferred. Kingham once averted the downfall of his goal when Harford had been drawn out and beaten by French, the right back kicking away as the ball was about to cross the line. After Yardley had handled in the course of a solo effort, the visitors came back in determined manner.

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Scott went off with a clear field on the left, and from an acute angle, drove hard into goal; Harford seemed sure of the ball, but could not hold it, and it passed across the goal-mouth with a lot of players handy; FRASER got there first, and tried hard to screw the ball past the upright, but sent it into the net instead. It was no flaw in the half-back's work, for he made a gallant attempt to cover the goal-keeper's mistake.

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For a time Gillingham gave a lot of anxiety, but the defence rose to the occasion, and drove off the attackers. The Town forwards and halves opened out the game once more, and whenever the wingers were fed there was danger for the visitors' rearguard. Rutherford made fine saves, and two or three times good fortune prevailed when skill was useless.

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At last a pretty bit of work culminated in a goal. Heslop had been sent away by Clark, and he got the ball into the middle to Yardley, who sent forward for Slicer to run in and shoot hard and low; Rutherford went down at full length, and just managed to tip the ball out, but before he could recover M'NESTRY rushed in and walked the ball into the net.

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The offside theory of the visitors was responsible for another goal. Slicer received near the touch-line at half-way, and Yardley halted long enough for the winger to get on the right side of him; the ball was shot forward into the middle by the winger, and the Gillingham backs rushed up and appealed for offside against Yardley. They were too late, however, and the centre-forward went on alone; Rutherford dashed out, but YARDLEY shot at the right moment and the ball landed in the net. There were one or two interesting passages afterwards, but no further score.

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When the Town kept the ball on the move they were always masters of the game, but there were times when they held it too close, and it was then Gillingham got their chances. The visitors

were at fault in like fashion, and never had a tithe of the opportunities that were made by the quick passing and dribbling of the Town forwards and halves. Rutherford had five or six times the work that fell to Harford.

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Rennie was the cleverest member of a line that often sparkled, and always showed superior skill and lacked neither energy nor pluck. He passed and opened up the game in masterly style, and M'Nestry worked as keenly and cleverly as ever. Yardley was not good in finishing, but a tormenter of the defenders, and both Heslop and Slicer played well.

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Fraser returned to something like his best, and gave a bright display, both in attack and defence, while little fault could be found with either McGinnigle or Clark, save the perpetual fault of over-dribbling, though this was not nearly so much in evidence as in the match at Newport. The line, as a whole, played fine football, and behind them Kingham and Hodgson were as resourceful and intelligent as ever. Harford had not much work.

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For Gillingham Rutherford and McGregor shone in defence, the goal-keeper making many good saves, while in the middle range Beacham was entitled to the highest meed of praise, though often baffled by the footwork of the opposing wing. White and Bethell were the most dangerous members of the attack, from which Loasby was probably missed a good deal.

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There were 5,000 spectators.

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LUTON TOWN		4
GILLINGHAM		1

LUTON TOWN.—Harford; Kingham Hodgson; Clark, McGinnigle, Fraser; Heslop, M'Nestry, Yardley, Rennie Slicer.

GILLINGHAM. — Rutherford; McGregor, Bishop; Beacham, Collins, Ellis; Bethell, French, Pateman, White, Scott.

Referee.—Mr. R. G. Rudd, Kenton.