

Crusader Comments

ON THE SWAMPING OF THAMES

ON a foggy day in December LUTON TOWN went to the West Ham Stadium and provided THAMES with a brace of much-needed points. At that time the London Club were in such dire straits that they appeared almost certain to be the wooden spoonists, but their stock began to go up as a result of Luton's defeat by the only goal of the match, and they have gradually improved until it is now all Luton to a Slip End cottage that they will escape the indignity of seeking re-election.

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They reached peak point during the Easter holidays, when they took five out of a possible six points, and they came to Luton full of assurance that they would be able to capture another brace of points and so make absolutely secure their position, whatever Norwich City and Newport County might achieve during the next three weeks. Well, they found that Luton were just as keen in April as they were in September, and a good deal more efficient, with the result that Thames received the severest flogging of any club in any of the principal Leagues in the British Isles.

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Now it was not wholly the case that Thames played badly; certainly they were no match for the Town on the day's form, but the score exaggerates the actual run of the play. What then, was the reason for the Town's remarkable scoring? To my mind it was simply that they adopted a style of game that cannot fail, and if the players have learned the lesson they will win their next two games comfortably, though the opposition is so much stronger.

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A man can be in but one place at once, even if he is a full-back or half-back of superlative quality. The Town's goals almost invariably came because the forwards realised the right moment to part with the ball after drawing opponents just enough to make recovery impossible. That simplifies positioning, too, and seven of the goals were comparatively simple affairs. I do not think Bailey, the Thames goalkeeper, had a dog's chance with any shot that scored, yet he will probably be the individual most blamed.

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A goal-keeper has little chance when a player receives the ball less than half-a-dozen yards from the target, and is virtually unmarked. That was the case on Saturday, and Bailey could do little except look on while the ball was put where he was not. It was match-winning football, and would have beaten any team. I fervently hope that the Town team will adopt the same methods on the next two Saturdays, and they may climb into third or fourth place. There is no reason why they should not continue this open, wing to wing football.

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Thames made a fairly good show in mid-field. Many teams have been to Luton and given much less trouble than Thames, yet have met with more success. They began quite well, and made everybody feel that there was going to be a real fight for the points, but after quarter of an hour the Town were always realising their superiority, and when a team gets that assurance collectively there is seldom any doubt about the result. Thames had their confidence played out of them before the change of ends.

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Bright combination on the Town's right flank led to the first goal. Clark, Heslop and M'Nestry all had a part in the advance, and when the extreme winger centred, Bryce neatly lifted the ball forward, and either Yardley or M'Nestry had a gift; the centre-forward was probably in an off-side position, and he stood and watched while M'Nestry converted.

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After a few attempts by Thames had been foiled, the Town went further ahead through a penalty kick. Warner did attempt to argue with the referee, but it was a flagrant case of handling in order to prevent Bryce benefiting by

a neat back-heel. CLARK scored with a terrific shot. A little later more skilful work on the right wing brought a centre from Heslop, and BRYCE headed a fine goal. After a succession of sharp assaults, YARDLEY beat Donnelly very cleverly and scored a splendid goal.

Interval:—

LUTON		4
THAMES		nil

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For over twenty minutes of the second half, the visitors took advantage of a certain amount of laxity among the Town players, and held their own very well. Harford had busy periods, and the backs were often in demand, though there was nothing very exciting. Now and then the Town skirmished, and Bailey and his backs were troubled, but generally the play was even. To Heslop was the credit for beginning the second half run of goals. He mastered Donnelly and sent into the centre, and Yardley left the ball for SLICER to run in.

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Many escapes had the Thames goal in the next few minutes, and everybody was pleased to see YARDLEY get a reward for a lot of sterling work after Heslop had hit the bar from close quarters, the centre-forward taking the rebound to give Bailey no chance.



Yardley watches Harry Bailey, the Thames goal-keeper, punch a hot shot over the bar, an incident from Luton Town's match with Thames on Saturday, when Luton won by the record score of 8 goals to nil.



Double figures might have been achieved had the Town gone all out, but there was some disposition to gallery play, and the game was wearing late before M'NESIRY converted a glorious centre by Slicer, and just before the end, HESLOP turned to account another fine effort by the outside left.

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All the Town players did well, and while the rearguard was as sound as ever, the middle line gave a superb display, joining in the obstructive work of the backs, and supporting their attack with judicious feeding. In the front line, which was very speedy and intelligent, exploiting the wide pass magnificently, all did well, and a good word should be given to Bryce for the way he settled down at inside-left in place of the suspended Rennie. He had as good a share as any in the victory.

LUTON TOWN		8
THAMES		0

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

THAMES.—Bailey; Donnelly, Smith; Warner, Spence, Igoe; F. Le May, McCarthy, Perry, Phillips, Mann.

Referee.—Mr. S. F. Rous, Hemel Hempstead.