

HOW THE FIRST GAME WAS LOST

LUTON FAIL AFTER LEADING

Handicapped By Injury to Harford

(By Crusader)

READING 2
LUTON 1

READING.—Richardson (L.); Forster, Richardson (J.); Darnell, McNeil, Barley; Ritchie, Eaton, Bacon, Harston, McPherson.

LUTON.—Harford; Kingham, Hodgson; Kean, Miller, Fraser; Heslop, M'Nestry, Tait, Rennie, Slicer.

Referee: Mr. A. J. Spittle, Gravesend.

READING'S officials and supporters frankly admitted that they were fortunate to annex both points. I think their team just about deserved the victory, for though they did not play better football than the Town, they put a lot more spirit into the struggle, and showed more enterprise at the right time. Conditions generally did not make for very pretty football, as the ground was hard, so much so that players complained afterwards of very sore feet; the sun was hot with a light breeze; the ball was light, and control was exceedingly difficult. Most of the players were also affected in some degree by the excitement, and Mr. Spittle did not maintain as firm a grip in the later stages as in the first half when his handling was all that could be desired. Taking the match as a whole, however, I do not think the Town supporters have much to worry about, for apart from the actual score they were as good as Reading.

TOUGH BACON

The dangerous period for the Town appeared to be in the first quarter of an hour, for they did not get quickly into their stride. In this time, however, Reading did not cause a lot of fear, for their forwards were well checked by the Town defenders, especially the rear-guard. When the Town forwards got going they were much quicker and neater in their approach work, but, like the home forwards, they could not find a shot when the opening came along. Practically the only decent shot during the match was the winning goal. Mid-field incident was not lacking, but whereas the Town halves and forwards were always trying to do something with the ball, the home team as a whole paid as much attention to the opponent as to the ball, and Bacon, the home leader, was anything but scrupulous in this respect. If he got the ball he seemed to think that he could trample down everything in the way; if he hadn't, then he threw his big weight at the man in possession, and it was a wonder tempers did not become frayed long before the change of ends.

HOW TAIT SCORED

The Town suffered through this super-energy of the home players, and Harford was so very badly fouled that the game was stopped for several minutes while he received attention. At the time we did not think that there would be such a disastrous result of this, for though Harford was limping very badly, he had not a lot to do. The sequel was to come in the second half. The Town forwards tried to keep the ball close, and against rugged opposition this did not pay, for when the ball beat the opponent the man was not allowed to do so. The wisdom of swinging it about came when the Town took the lead six minutes before the change of ends. M'Nestry drew the defence, and then gave Heslop a fine pass. The winger sped away and as Richardson (J.) ran across Heslop lifted the ball into the middle where Tait was in wait. The centre-forward got the ball under control very cleverly, and a shot at once would probably have beaten the goalkeeper, but Tait dribbled into goal: Richardson ran out, and for a moment it seemed as though he had foiled the forward, but TAIT managed to retain possession and push the ball into the net. The Reading players appealed, apparently that the ball had been out of play before Heslop received, but as it happened the linesman was close up to the winger, and could not have failed to see the course of the ball. So we were a goal up at half-time.

LUTON 1
READING 0

For some time after the change of ends the Town continued to show the more skill, and there were menacing raids on the home goal, the ball being frequently in front of Richardson. Once Kingham paved the way for an attack that might

well have succeeded. He beat Bacon and Harston, and then made his way well beyond the middle line before lifting the ball out to Heslop. The winger had the field to himself in that quarter, and made ground before swinging the ball right across goal, and Rennie darted in to make a fine attempt with his head, the goalkeeper just managing to deflect the ball over the bar. Many corners were forced, first one end and then the other being the scene, but the Town were not well together, and shots were few and far between, and not often on the mark when they did come.

BACON'S SOLO EFFORT

Reading equalised when such an event appeared most unlikely. A long kick out to the right-wing was no use to the pair that should have been there, but Bacon raced out and brought the ball along the touch-line. Miller rushed across and managed to get the ball away from him near the corner-flag. Had he put the ball behind for a corner, or sent into touch it would have been all right, but he fell, and Bacon quickly regained possession, ran down the goal-line, and then tapped the ball in front of goal to HARSTON, who had but to shoot into the empty goal. It was a lucky point in its way, but Bacon deserved the credit for his enterprise.

A CHANCE SHOT

Play became scrappy, with a lot of "playing the man" when the ball was asking for it, and the whistle was often heard, and there was not much of a threat at either end, and we had almost come to the conclusion that each side had as much as could be expected when Reading took the lead with ten minutes left for play. There was a scraggy rush on the home left wing, and McPherson hit the ball hard and high goalwards. Harford got to it and punched away, and it travelled beyond the penalty area. DARNELL took possession, and almost immediately drove hard at goal. He had the joy of seeing the ball travel among a crowd of players and land in the net—a chance effort well taken. Harford would probably have got to the ball quite comfortably but for his injury, but he could not recover quickly enough. The closing stages found another thrill, for Bacon advanced to within three or four yards when Hodgson took a goal-kick that should never have been taken while he was so close in. The Reading leader received the ball on his body and then shot, and the ball struck the bar and came out, to be scrambled away. The Town tried hard to equalise, but they were well held, and the end came with the points to Reading.

DEFENCE SOUND

For the Town defence we need have no fear, for they all played splendidly. Unhappily, Harford's injury was of such a nature as not only to prevent him doing his best during the rest of the game, but he will probably be out of the game for a few weeks, maybe longer. He took the ball coolly and comfortably, and he came out and punched away nicely, especially from corner kicks. Generally, however, he was so well covered that his work was easy. Kingham and Hodgson played right up to standard, both kicking and tackling well, in spite of a gruelling time from the opposing forwards. I hope Tommy will not allow goal kicks to be taken again, however, if opponents are so close as was the case when Bacon nearly scored. There is a law to prevent it. Fraser and Kean were all that could be desired, and Charlie played as well as ever, while Kean knows pretty well all the needs of a forward, and he could hold his own when the opposition became too assertive. Miller is a pretty, rather than an effective, player, and could hold his own with footballers, but against players of the type of the Reading inside forwards he needs more physique. His passing was all right, but he was knocked about a bit.

COMBINATION LACKING

The forwards were not together at any

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time, at least not to the quality we want, or to what they did at the end of last season. Tait was an enterprising leader, and he and Slicer took the eye most for effective work. The others were not in position as regularly as they should have been, and there was a lack of thrust in front of goal, the shooting being moderate, and rarely was the goal-keeper tested. Harford had more to do than the home custodian. Still, it was the first game, and better things will come—perhaps have come already, since they had a further chance last night against Northampton, and this is being written long before the Cobblers' visit. As a whole we have little to grumble about; if a team relegated from a higher sphere had been beaten at home in the first game, even by our favourites, they would not have much hope of returning to the Second Division, and Reading think they have a very bright chance.

READING MODERATE

I don't think so if Saturday's display was their best, or anything like it. The backs were fairly useful, and they and the halves put a lot of mettle into their work, as did the forwards, but there was not much combination. It was chiefly a matter of kicking the ball hard and running for it, using every ounce of strength to beat down the opposition. I liked Forster, at back, Barley and McNeil at half, and Harston and McPherson forward.

The attendance was 13,880, and the receipts £794, and there were probably 400 spectators from Luton.