

THE READING MATCH

On Saturday at Reading:—

READING	2
LUTON TOWN	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.

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HAD anyone suggested to Luton Town team or to their numerous supporters at half-time that Reading would win, he would have been laughed to scorn. It is true that there had not been a great deal of good football, but, considering that conditions were all against skilful football, and that the Town had for half-an-hour shown the better quality, there seemed nothing to fear in the second half.

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Alas! the goal that TAIT had scored for the Town after 39 minutes' play was not enough to win the game. It should have been, or, at the very least, should have enabled them to bring away a point from a ground that has never been very fruitful for Luton. The Biscuiteers obtained the equaliser through a forceful bit of work by their burly centre-forward, Bacon, who captured a loose ball far away on the right wing, and dribbled down the goal-line from the corner-flag almost to the post before turning it inside for HARSTON to do the trick.

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Bacon had no business to be so far away on the right, if football were played according to diagram, but there he was; Miller went after, and caught, him, dispossessed him, and then slipped and fell. Had he slipped the ball behind for a corner, or put it into touch, I doubt if Reading would ever have scored. The goal was a tonic to them, and they played harder than ever in their kick-and-rush style, and the winning goal fell to them when there remained but ten minutes for play.

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That was a lucky point in its way, but quite deserved by the man who scored. McPherson, who used to play centre-forward for Watford, Manchester United, Chesterfield, and one or two more teams, and is now an outside-left, swung the ball into the goal-mouth, and Harford punched out. The ball travelled beyond the penalty area, and DARNELL, the home right-half, took it in his stride and shot with great force. Harford would have had a good chance but for his knee injury, which was sustained in the first half, and crippled him badly. As it was, the ball found a way through a maze of players, and such an effort would not score once in a hundred times. It counted on this occasion, however, and Darnell deserved the congratulations for his promptness in shooting.

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Reading had the ball in the net on another occasion, following a free-kick, but there were two players so well off-side that the Town players had no need to argue with the referee, who was right on the spot and whistled against Reading. He whistled a lot, but there were times when it was not enough to whistle, and he had to speak to players. Reading are a big, rugged lot, and stood on no ceremony at all. Bacon, Eaton and McPherson, among the forwards, Darnell, at half, and the backs simply hurled their weight at opponents, and there were reprisals after the change of ends, and the good feeling which Joe Smith, the Reading manager, asked for by means of a loud-speaker before the game, was not impressive.

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In addition to Harford, who was very badly kicked after he had beaten Eaton in the first half, Tom Hodgson's shin had the imprints of studs in spite of the protection of the shin guard, and a kick on the hand necessitated the Town captain standing before the X-Ray apparatus on Monday morning, a knuckle having been damaged severely. Miller, Kean and Tait also went through it, while on the other side, Eaton's nose and Kean's elbow met in collision, with disastrous results to the nose, and later Eaton was carried off, suffering from concussion. Possibly there was not a player who really wished to hurt an opponent, but I could not help wondering at the easy manner in which the crowd took it all. Perhaps they got used to that sort of thing in Second Division matches. In any event, it was rougher stuff than we are ordinarily accustomed to in the Third Division.

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Harford and his backs played very well indeed, and the flank halves were the best of the side. Miller was often in evidence with skilful play, but was hardly aggressive enough against a rugged trio of inside forwards. The forwards did not play well together, and Tait had comparatively little support. He was a trier all through, though I thought he might have got his goal in more crisp style. Of his courage and thrustfulness there can be no doubt, and, given the right help, he will make his mark.