

BRIGHTER LUTON

FINE VICTORY AT GILLINGHAM LAST NIGHT

McGinnigle's Success as Pivot

(By CRUSADER.)

LUTON TOWN must have done a great deal last night towards completely restoring confidence among their supporters. Gillingham have been a very hard team to play during the last six or seven years, and several of the games on their curious ground have been far from pleasant. Last night, however, the game was the best conducted I have seen between the two clubs on that ground; the referee had little trouble, and his whistle was heard only at comparatively rare intervals. At the close the Gillingham officials complimented the Town team, and also expressed their satisfaction with the referee, whose name is appearing on the League list for the first time, though he has been on the London Combination list for some seasons.

THE DIFFERENCE

It was a pity that the crowd that saw the Town defeated at home on Saturday could not see this match. Among the 6,000 spectators a few voices were raised when the Town turned out, but often during the game there was generous applause for the cleverness of the Town team. What made the difference as compared with the Town's display against Southend? In the first place it was due to the return of McGinnigle and Fraser to the middle line. Last season the Scot was inconsistent, but everybody has remarked this season upon his increased pace and quickness on the ball. He has played remarkably well at right-half, but in the pivotal position last night he touched the brilliance we saw in the re-played cup-tie against the Orient at Highbury last season, and in this form the position is solved. Then the forward changes worked out well, and all round there was a speed and determination that wore down the Gillingham men, and it must not be imagined they are a poor side. Far from it; I think their forward line is probably better than any they have fielded since the War.

ACCORDING TO PLAN

The secret of the Town's success, to my way of thinking, was that they followed dressing-room plans; they kept the ball on the move, and not only had much the better of the general run of the game, giving the home defence more work than fell upon the Town rearguard, but with a little good luck they might well have had at least three more goals, the ball running most unkindly for Tait on two occasions when his dash merited success, and on a third when Heslop missed a good chance, while Rennie shot with all his old verve and power, and two or three attempts would have beaten any goalkeeper had the ball been a few inches lower.

Imrie again kept goal splendidly, and Kingham and Hodgson were just as good as they were when at their best last season. Kean was not so much in the eye as on Saturday, because he had no reason to be, but played finely. McGinnigle was in wonderful form, and in attack and defence played magnificently, while Fraser's classy methods evoked rounds of applause. Heslop did very well, and M'Nestry, Tait and Rennie were a fine inside trio, while Turner's work suggested that he has come to stay.

Gillingham were well served by McGregor and Lester at back, and Bishop put up a fine game at half, while of the forwards the wingers were best, doing very good work, but Renwick, of whom a great deal has been written, was little seen.

EARLY EXCHANGES

The weather was fine, and the ground very hard. Hodgson won the toss and set Gillingham to face the sun, but it did not trouble them much. McGinnigle was quickly in the picture with a good clearance from the home left, and when a corner was earned, Kingham and Kean got the ball away.

Bethell and Scott were lively enough, and after another corner Imrie brought off a fine save from White, and also dealt with another from the same foot. Rennie then sent Turner away and the winger middled nicely for Tait to take the ball in his stride, but the linesman flagged him offside. Burnett ran out and cleared from M'Nestry, and then fine work in which all the Town halves took a part compelled Gillingham to defend. The home halves were strong, however, and got the ball away. Tait was offside after good work by M'Nestry, and then Rennie shot yards too high, but the Town were now going full steam ahead, and when they came again the crowd gasped as a full-blooded drive from Rennie rebounded from an opponent. Heslop was given offside several times, once or twice after beating the back in the sprint. In a fierce attack by the home forwards the Town defenders were hard pressed, but prevailed, and Bethell eventually fired wide. Imrie cleverly caught a high dropping centre from Scott, and Kean's fine work was spoiled by offside against Heslop. Kean dropped the ball nicely into the goal-mouth a moment later, but there was no one there to help it through. Kean and Heslop again made headway, and from the latter's centre Turner headed just wide. A fine effort by Turner gave Tait a chance, but he was overwhelmed in the goal-mouth.

TWO GOALS

Playing bright football the Town pressed hotly, and Rennie drove in a glorious shot which skimmed the bar. After 28 minutes Tait and M'Nestry overcame the home defenders by quick and energetic work, and M'NESTRY sent in a blazing shot which the goalkeeper tried hard to parry, but the pace completely beat him. A moment later M'Nestry was nearly through again, but Lester recovered just in time. Then Gillingham had a turn, and Scott centred well; Imrie got to the ball but could not hold it first time, and Renwick dashed into him, but the goalkeeper, although damaged, managed to get the ball out, and the backs cleared. Gillingham now played desperately, but the Town defenders would not get rattled, and ugly situations were never allowed to develop. Turner made a sparkling run from Rennie's pass, and centred neatly, and a scramble ensued in the goal-mouth, but Burnett managed to get the ball away. More offside decisions at the intervention of the linesman held up Town attacks, but Fraser made a characteristic move that brought another attack, and Tait was badly fouled a yard outside the penalty area by Lester. RENNIE took the kick and the ball travelled fast and low just inside the upright, the goalkeeper vainly diving at full length, though he did touch the ball. Again the Town right made progress, and Heslop centred for Turner to head into Burnett's hands. A brilliant bit of work by Rennie in midfield caused the crowd to laugh loudly at the discomfiture of two or three home players, and especially Collins, who threw himself at the Town player, but failed to touch him. The interval came just afterwards with the score:

LUTON	2
GILLINGHAM	0

M'Nestry was crowded out when the Town right advanced on the restart, and a lovely pass by Rennie found Turner safely, and the winger tried a drive which rattled the side net. A flash by Williams sent the ball under the bar, but Imrie took it coolly and cleared. Fine work by Rennie and the Town right wing brought a struggle in the home goalmouth, and there was a lucky escape. Burnett saved several times, and then Kingham and Hodgson in turn stopped hot rushes to the other end. Imrie made a splendid save from Scott, and McGinnigle and Kean got the Town right on the move. Heslop middling well, and after a hot scramble the ball was kicked away, but Turner got hold and skimmed the bar with a beautiful shot. M'Nestry capped more fine work by Tait and Rennie when he hit the side net. McGinnigle was fouled, and Kingham placed the free kick well, and from Rennie's pass Tait all but increased the lead with a backheel effort. The Town were playing really fine football, and Fraser again paved the way for a successful movement, sharp passing ending with Tait transferring to RENNIE, who crashed home one of his old-time left-foot drives that left the goalkeeper helpless.

GILLINGHAM'S GOAL

This was 17 minutes after the restart, and, in response to cries that

they should use their weight. Gillingham played desperately and rather roughly. They nearly lost a goal through it, as Tait was fouled just outside the penalty area, and Rennie's shot was only held at the second attempt by the goalkeeper; the Town players thought the ball was through, for it passed between Burnett's legs, but he was given the benefit of the doubt. Turner and Rennie then went through, and the latter banged in a hot ball that was just wide. A burst by Gillingham's right wing followed, and Williams shot in with great force; Imrie went down to the ball, and would have saved all right but for the bumpy ground; as it was, he managed to arrest the ball, but RENWICK dashed in and forced the ball into the net. The Town were soon at it again, and Rennie scorched the bar with a terrific shot. Gillingham's forwards made spasmodic raids, and once Hodgson handled, but the free kick was cleared, and Tait raced through and forced a corner. This was cleared after a clumsy bout in the goal-mouth, and then the goal narrowly escaped again as Tait rushed in to meet a centre from Heslop, and he looked like landing in the net with the ball, but it passed just the wrong side of the upright. Bethell and Williams then went down, and Imrie came out and punched away from the winger. Heslop and M'Nestry, with the help of Kean, then got away, and a corner was forced. Burnett saving in a scuffle from Turner, and, just before the end, Turner ran through and centred well, M'Nestry lifting the ball over the bar. The Town maintained the upper hand to the end.

LUTON TOWN 3

GILLINGHAM 1

GILLINGHAM.—Burnett; McGregor, F. Lester; Beacham, Collins, Bishop; Williams, White, Renwick, Bethell, Scott.

LUTON. — Imrie; Kingham, Hodgson; Kean, McGinnigle, Fraser; Heslop, M'Nestry, Tait, Rennie, Turner.

Referee.—Mr. A. J. Jewell, London.