

LOSS AT BRENTFORD

BRILLIANTLY RECOVERED AT NORTHAMPTON

Forward Improvement: Gallant Defence

(By Crusader)

At Brentford on Saturday:—

BRENTFORD 1
LUTON TOWN nil

BRENTFORD.—Nash; Hodge, Adamson; Salt, Bain, Ware; Foster, Robson, Lane, J. C. Burns, Berry.

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

Referee: Mr. W. E. Russell, Swindon.

At Northampton on Monday:—

LUTON TOWN 2
NORTHAMPTON TOWN nil

NORTHAMPTON.—Hammond; Inglis, Anthony; Allon, Odell, Davies; Scott, Boyle, Bowen, Dawes (A.), Wells.

LUTON.—Imrie; Kingham, Hodgson; Kean, McGinnigle, Hale; M'Nestry, Tait, Yardley, Rennie, Slicer.

Referee.—Mr. H. E. Gray, Ilford.

AT BRENTFORD

So well did the defences play at Griffin Park on Saturday that there was only one goal. That fell to Brentford shortly before the game was half an hour old, and it was a goal that crowned a lot of good effort by the home forwards without being a brilliant essay in the actual achievement. Foster had put across many good centres that were dealt with more or less comfortably by the Town defenders, and then he sent the ball across once, and it descended among a mob of players; just how it occurred was difficult to see, but BURNS managed to get his head to the ball just before Imrie's hands and several feet could get to it, and in the net it went.

Brentford were no better than the Town in the general play; their defensive work was made to look better than it really was because the Town forwards did not work so well together as the home vanguard. The chances that came to the home forwards, real scoring chances, were not so numerous as those that came to the Town, and these were few enough, in all conscience. Nevertheless, it would be hard to say that any one of the home forwards missed an easy chance, but that could be said on at least three occasions of the Town forwards.

One of the brightest bits in the Town's advances came when Rennie outwitted the opposition and sent the ball through the middle for Tait to take it in his stride, slip past Hodge, and find himself with a clear course for goal. He might have run in close, for there was none to hinder, but he preferred to let fly at once—a good idea in many instances, but not when there is such an opportunity as this—and the ball gave no trouble at all to Nash; it passed harmlessly behind. On another occasion in the second half Tait hit the ball at once and it went straight to Nash, when a well-placed shot might have done the trick. The third occasion was when Heslop raced past the backs, and as Nash advanced he shot past the goalkeeper, but wide of the mark.

Though these chances were missed it should not be laid to the charge of these two players that the match was lost for that reason. The main fault was that the forwards could not get into that easy striding football that meant so much last season. We are still looking for it—the quick transfer of the ball from wing to wing, or from halves to forwards before the opposition can recover position. There were indications that the forwards were going to do this, for they gave the "Bees'" defence a lot of worry in the first portion of each half, but they could not keep it up.

It would be difficult to find any word of adverse criticism for the halves and the backs. Imrie had not much to do, for his backs played magnificently all through, kicking a good length, and showing much resource and fine perception against an energetic attack. The halves again played brilliantly, and once more Kean's work deserved success, for he continually piled his forwards, not merely the pair in front of him but all the inside men, with precise passes. Fraser had the misfortune to be hurt in the second half, and though he would not leave the field, and pluckily stood up to a stiff task while in great pain, the effectiveness of the attack on that flank was impaired. McGinnigle made up a powerful line, and is certainly the best at the club's command at the moment.

There were several players among the "Bees" to whom one could take a fancy. Nash was not greatly extended, but the backs owed a lot to the hard graft of their halves, who fought every foot of ground, and showed good powers of recovery. The forwards were fast and tricky on the wings, and it was well that McGinnigle and the backs kept a strict eye on the mercurial Lane. Perhaps the best feature of the match was that it was so free from rough play, for such vigour as was introduced was not in any way vicious, and even the mad folk among the crowd of 12,000 felt only an occasional desire to yell to somebody to "Play the game!"

AT NORTHAMPTON

It was a very gallant fight that enabled Luton Town to take both points from Northampton on the County Ground, and I am pretty certain that only the most blassed of the "Cobblers'" supporters grudging the "Hatters'" their success. To my mind the best performance the Town had given before this was their victory at Gillingham. That, by the way, was a mid-week match. They won there against a big and tough side because they played football, and Monday night's result was the reward of similar methods.

Sometimes, I must confess, I have said to myself when the Town were being knocked about a lot, that a few of the old hands who would not take without giving could be brought into

the team, but when the indignation has worn off I have felt that it were better the team maintained the clean game. On Monday night the "Cobblers" adopted tactics that were distinctly unpleasant, but I am glad to say that the Town, though they stood a lot of battery, stuck to the game, and for that reason won the appreciation of the crowd.

Thanks to the introduction of Yardley at centre, with Tait inside right, there was a vast improvement in the Town's attack from the beginning, and they were just as good as the "Cobblers" in the first half-hour. Play followed the normal course of two evenly matched sides, in which defensive departments were particularly strong, and so there were not numerous narrow escapes, though the ball rapidly traversed the field.

Credit for the finest efforts during the first half-hour went to Kean and M'Nestry for brilliant runs, and with a little luck there would have been goals as a result of their work. Yardley failed with a good opportunity after making a capital run, but at the other end there was no such chance, and though Bowen never got in a shot at goal, he had several headers that went wide.

Then Hodgson was laid out as the result of a violent charge by Boyle, and had to be carried off, and as soon as the game was resumed a desperate struggle took place in the Town goal-mouth, Imrie once losing the ball, but it was got away eventually, and Yardley took possession in midfield. The "Cobblers'" backs had shown themselves adept in the offside rule, but I had thought they were carrying on the method at a good deal of risk. So it proved. They were close to the half-way line, and Tom Tait was just inside his own half when Yardley sent the ball up the middle. Inglis and Anthony both rushed forward and yelled, expecting Tait to be given offside, but he was well inside the half when the ball was passed, and he darted past the backs at top speed, and they made fruitless efforts to overtake him. Hammond did not know what to do, until Tait was inside the penalty area, and then he came out, but TAIT never lost his head, and shot the ball past him to crown a clinking effort amidst a volume of cheers.

Two minutes later Rennie sent the ball to the left, and Inglis gathered it near the half-way line and close to touch; Slicer did not hesitate to challenge, and the back's kick rebounded from him. Yardley was close at hand. He turned quickly and then sprinted at his best speed for goal. Inglis tried desperately to get at him, but could not manage it, and when the centre-forward was well inside the penalty area Anthony came for him; Yardley slipped the ball past him to the right, and M'NESTRY had sized up the chance and rushed in and banged the ball past Hammond.

So the Town had put on two goals while they had but ten men, and both were splendid efforts. The "Cobblers" did not like it, and made strong rushes in which they tried to beat a way through by sheer force, but to no purpose, and the interval found the score:—

LUTON 2
NORTHAMPTON nil

The story of the second half will be regarded as something of a football epic by the Lutonians who witnessed it. The "Cobblers" resumed with determination written on their faces, and within a few minutes it had become sheer desperation. Tom Hodgson had come out, but was almost a cipher on the extreme left; Slicer was flitting about at left-half, and Hale was stubbornly contending at full back. The other defenders were playing right at top form, and it was a treat to see the way Kingham, Kean and McGinnigle broke up assault after assault, coolly and cleverly, and I am absolutely certain they succeeded only because they never failed to play the ball. They were knocked about, sometimes viciously, but came up smiling for more.

Now and then the Town forwards relieved the pressure by breaking away, and the home goal had narrow escapes from Yardley and M'Nestry. Then Northampton went into it again, and following a terrific struggle in the Town goal area Imrie was beaten, but Kean had sensed the danger and cleared off the goal-line. Still the "Cobblers" strove to batter their way through, and there was hot work under the nose of Imrie, who made some capital clearances.

Twice there were narrow escapes again at the Northampton end. Tait once made a brilliant solo effort and tapped the ball across the goal, but Yardley shot over. Later Hodgson managed to get in a standing kick, and the ball sailed across; Rennie fired, but the ball slipped off his foot to Yardley, who again missed a good chance by getting too far under the ball. Immediately afterwards M'Nestry shot on to the net when a pass would have been profitable for Yardley, who was unmarked.

Then Northampton caught the Town defenders napping. Allon took advantage of the referee's back being turned to steal eight or ten yards for a free kick without the ball being placed, and while it was still on the move. He sent it to Scott, who had centred before the Town players were aware of what was happening, and BOWEN headed into the net. Encouraged by their supporters, the "Cobblers" attacked hotly, but were kept at bay, and the whistle went with the Town victorious.

Imrie kept a fine goal, making many good saves with coolness and confidence. Kingham played a marvellous game throughout, and this in spite of a nasty ankle injury sustained in the first five minutes. Until hurt, Hodgson completed a brilliant rearguard, and Hale was ubiquitous both as a half and as a back. McGinnigle once more gave a glorious display, reminiscent of his Cup-tie game at Highbury last season, and they could not knock him out, while Kean was the classiest half-back in the game.

The forward changes worked well, and there was more impressive play than usual until Hodgson's mishap. Tait adapted himself splendidly to the inside right position, and he and Kean gave M'Nestry delightful passes that enabled him to give of his best. He made wonderful runs, and with a little more accuracy in centreing would be ideal for the position. On the other wing Rennie was not so prominent, but was more of a helpmeet in defence in the second half, and Slicer had done enough to justify his inclusion before Hodgson's injury, while later he put up a remarkable game at half-back. Yardley also quite justified his return to the team, for he distributed well, and gave the backs no end of trouble.

What I liked about the new forward did not hang on too long; they kept the ball on the move, and it was, perhaps, as well, for they got no mercy from the opposition. The line should have a real trial, and if they play the open game as in this game they will win many matches.