

ROVERS PAY TOLL

LUTON TAKE THREE WITHOUT RESPONSE

Combination Wanted

(By Crusader)

LUTON TOWN 3
BRISTOL ROVERS 0

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

BRISTOL ROVERS.—Calvert; Russell, Hill; Routledge, Pickering, Cooper; Oakton, Dix, Cook, Townrow, Young.

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

JUST a fast, hard slog, with the balance of play slightly in favour of the winners. This would be a terse description of the game at Luton on Saturday. The addition of the points to the Town's moderate bag was very welcome, but it cannot be said that the method of achieving success won much kudos. Probably the result was due chiefly to the superiority of the Town middle and back divisions for they were better able to hold the Rovers' attacks than the visiting defenders could counter the Town's work. The changes in the Town forward line could not be accounted a success as far as attractive football was concerned, and though three goals were scored for the first time since the first Saturday in October, I should want to see the effect of the changes in a game away before admitting any noteworthy improvement in finishing.

HELTER-SKELTER

Much of the play was very disappointing, there being too much ballooning, and helter-skelter rather than machine-like advance. I saw the Town in a practice match during last week, and by the manner of their start on Saturday I thought that we were going to see brighter football, but the Town soon descended to the type of the Rovers' play, and in some phases of the game failed to equal the style of their victims. The game was not kept open enough by the forwards and when it came to marksmanship the Rovers were more enterprising than the Town attack. Happily, the Town halves and backs, after a rather shaky start, mastered the opposition, and of the two, the Rovers' custodian had much more work.

YARDLEY ON THE SPOT

For a few minutes after the start the Rovers were the more threatening, and Imrie was the first goalkeeper to handle. The Town's first bid came through the agency of M'Nestry, who sent Heslop on his way, but the effort was frustrated, and then McGinnigle, playing in more of an attacking role than usual, assisted the forward to assault severely, Tait failing to control when a goal was imminent. M'Nestry next manoeuvred neatly, and got in a dropping shot which the goalkeeper tipped over the bar. A hot struggle in the Rovers' goal-mouth promised success, but after warm work the ball was scrambled away. The Rovers had a turn of shorter duration, Young missing badly when he had a fine opportunity. Kingham was prominent for clever tackling, and a burst by the Town left wing seemed bound to succeed, but Calvert brought off a grand save by diving at full length. The backs at each end did stout work before the first goal. Kean was striving to open up a way for his forwards when heavily brought down. He took the free kick, and Calvert knocked the ball high in the air; it came down straight, and YARDLEY was on the spot to head into goal.

SECOND SUCCESS

There were fierce rushes by the Rovers, but Imrie was rarely troubled, and then Tait took possession of a pass and rushed out to the left; as he was turning into goal again he was brought down illegally. Turner took the free-kick, and Tait and Calvert went for the ball; the centre-forward won, and HESLOP darted in and kicked into the net. The Town had to defend stubbornly, and the halves and backs were not always reliable, but covered well even when the kicking was bad, and several shots by the Rovers failed to pass the vigilant defenders. Calvert made another fine save, this time from Tait. Dix and Oakton were very clever in initiating more attacks, and the ball came across the Town goal-mouth in dangerous fashion. In the closing stages of the first half good attempts were made by Dix at one end, and by Tait and Yardley at the other, but the Town held a good lead at the cross-over.

LUTON 2
ROVERS 0

Second half play was poor, and the Rovers had as much of the ball as the Town for a considerable period, but only once was Imrie tested, and he came off well. In a way this was a lucky save, and yet Imrie deserved more applause than he received for the quick working of his mind and of his feet. The ball appeared to be coming somewhere hip high, but dipped suddenly, and Imrie had to change from hands to feet; he blocked the ball on the line, thanks to his long legs. Then there were dull periods in which the forwards of either side completely failed to outwit the defenders, and neither goalkeeper was seriously challenged. Now and then the Rovers pulled out all they knew, and gave a lot of trouble, but Kingham and Hodgson were now masterful, and such shots as found their way into goal gave little anxiety to the custodian.

A HARD TIME

It was a welcome change to see Yardley have a bang at goal, and must have been almost as surprising to the Rovers goalkeeper as to the crowd. Calvert parried the ball, but dropped it, and then retrieved it as it was between his legs, a loud claim for a goal being negatived by the referee, and rightly. Splendid play by Kean and his colleagues on the right gave the Rovers' defence a hard time subsequently, but Calvert rose to the occasion and brought off many good saves. Yardley had another try, and this time scraped the bar, but when the Rovers replied Oakton put in a great shot which struck the foot of the post, and Imrie got his hands to it at the same time. There had been little to choose between the teams in this period, but the Town infused a little more energy into their efforts, and the Rovers' goal had one or two narrow escapes before falling to Turner.

TURNER'S TRICK

The winger had his chance after Fraser had deprived the Rovers right half, and sent to Yardley, who turned the ball to TURNER. The winger shot with great power from over twenty yards distance, and the ball travelled at great speed and entered the goal just inside the farther post. It was a very fine effort and we wanted more such. The Town had the better of the game to the end, though the Rovers continued to raid with determination, and now and then there were clever attempts by Dix, while Cook continued to rush the defence at every opportunity. Tait made a few thrustful efforts, and now and then McGinnigle and Fraser copied Kean and took a hand in the attack, but Calvert and his colleagues resisted stoutly, and were not beaten again.

TOWN DEFENCE

Imrie did his little very well, as usual, and after a shaky quarter-of-an-hour the Town backs played finely. They had their work cut out to keep the hasty Cook in check, but stuck to him well. The kicking was as good as the tackling, and there was usually a wise packing of the goal area when the Rovers' forwards exerted themselves to the full. McGinnigle played very much better than in the previous match, and took more share in attack than usual. He would do well to get the ball out to the wings more. Kean was clever as usual, and played delightful football, while Fraser held his own very well against a hot wing. It was the general soundness of the Town halves and backs that gave the Town the advantage, and they had to work very hard to hold a courageous attack.

ATTACK

The forwards were good individually again, and there was any amount of energy, but much was misspent because the positioning was not good, and there was a distinct lack of combined effort. The ball was held much too close by every member of the line. Tait was a tremendous worker, but often raced out

of position, and did not shoot often enough for a leader, but it must be said that he did not get many passes from his colleagues. M'Nestry fell away after a beginning that gave great hopes of his very best game, his early play contributing fine passes. Heslop was useful, but delayed his centres, as also did Turner, who has played better. He did not control well, though in the early stages he got over two or three nice passes that merited better result. Yardley was not so assertive as an inside man as a centre-forward, but worked very hard as usual, and when the ball was near goal, he was invariably somewhere at hand. All the inside men, however, shrank from trying a shot from a respectable distance.

ROVERS

Calvert was not a polished performer, perhaps, but made many fine saves, and struck one as a goalkeeper likely to make a name. Russell and Hill were dashing backs, shirking nothing, kicking with great power, and tackling fiercely. The halves came much in the same category, and were very resolute. Pickering was a stout pivot, and Routledge showed intelligence in his use of the ball. Dix was quite the cleverest forward on the field, and got much good work out of Oakton, the wing being the best on view. Cook still has vim and thrust, but is not the marksman of his palmy Brighton days, and neither Townrow nor Young did great things.

As a whole the game was clean and well-conducted, and there was no vicious foul during the struggle, most of the offences being of a petty character. There were 6,244 spectators, and the receipts were £352 10s. 8d.