

WOLVES WIN AT LUTON.

TOWN MAKE A PLUCKY BUT DISAPPOINTING FIGHT

Triumph Of Tactics

(By CRUSADER)

WOLVERHAMPTON WAN... 2
LUTON TOWN 1

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

WOLVERHAMPTON.—Whittaker; Lowton, Lumberg; Rhodes, Hollingsworth, Richards; Phillips, Bottrill, Hartill, Deacon, Barracough.

Referee.—Mr. A. Jelly, Leicester.

LET us admit straightway that every player of the losing side as well as the winners did his very best; that there was not a "slacker" among them; that each was as anxious as any unit of the crowd that his club should pass into the next round of the competition. None would question that The pessimists who have never given the Town credit for their two fine victories in previous rounds have probably been saying that they told us so; they did not like to do it, but it was not their fault that they had been denied the gloomy satisfaction earlier. Well, they are able to lean back and sigh with 'he content of accurate presence, if they wish, but any fair-minded individual would agree that we never saw the Town at their best, and the fact that the Wolves continue in the competition is due as much to the shortcomings of the Town as to the ability of the visitors, though from their quality it would be miserly to detract one iota.

TACTICS—WISE AND OTHERWISE

My faith in the Town lay in the hope that they would fight on the lines adopted at Swindon, and while there was a big difference between the balanced football of the Wolves and the display of the Railwaymen, had that hope been fulfilled the Town would have remained in the competition. They should have made the game safe in the first half, and the Wolves recognised that there would have to be a change of methods if they were to hold what they had taken in the early stages. They acted accordingly, for their tactics after the interval were devoted to a slower but more calculating advance. Instead of kick and rush, they went in for neat positional play, almost like moves on a chess-board, and the alteration took the Town by surprise. On the other hand, the Town maintained that lop-sided attack that has almost consistently been their undoing, the right wing hanging on to the ball or trying to plough through a mud-patch when there were harrows lying in the way. Had they kept the game open, even in the second half, there might have been a happier story. IF—

Were it possible to re-play I should feel as optimistic as about this match, always, however, with the proviso that the Town would return to the effective open game that ejected Swindon and Lincoln. That style spells success in League or Cup-let. There were times in the match when other forwards could not conceal their impatience at the inadequate return they had for their outlay in energy and craft; times when the Wolves were saved only by the failure of the right wing to get the ball into the middle promptly. That was one reason for defeat, and a secondary cause was the hesitant beginning of the defence. During the last two months I have received a number of letters asking why, and hoping for a change in this respect—the slowness of the mark at the start of the match. I do not know why it is so, but it is clear that it is not unfitness, for the team takes it through and finishes any game as strongly as the opposition.

ONE OF MANY

Those were the weaknesses that brought about the fall, but, having registered them, let us give the team full measure of praise for reaching this stage. It has meant a tremendous lot to the club, and no team of similar class has had two harder fights in the previous rounds and come through safely. Players are not infallible, and there were bigger disappointments for football followers in other parts of the country; failures by teams of greater fame than Luton facing less capable opponents, for the Wolves must be one of the strongest sides in the country. They are a credit to their management, for most are young players, several with no outstanding ability, yet with the great saving factor that they have learned the value of co-operation, that team work is better than individualism, however sparkling that may be. The Town players deserve praise

for the manner in which they fought through to success in their first two rounds, and also for the plucky manner in which they strove to avoid defeat on Saturday.

THE PENALTY

The opening stages found the Wolves very businesslike, and two quick thrusts had to be resisted before the Town made a move. It was a very dangerous counter-stroke, and with a little good fortune might have succeeded. Kean and Tait were the initiators, and when M'Nestry shot the ball goal-wards the visiting defenders did not expect Yardley to turn up so hurriedly; he knocked Lumberg over, and M'Nestry darted in, but in the struggle for possession inadvertently fouled his opponent, and a free kick was given. Just before this Hodgson had received a reminder of the reputation of the Wolves for energetic methods, for he had to receive attention following a foul by Bottrill. Then came a right-wing raid by the Wolves, and the ball came right over to the left wing; Barracough was partly foiled, but managed to get the ball to Deacon, who shot hard; it might or might not have scored, but a hand shot out long before it reached goal, and the whistle sounded before the ball was in the net. It was hard luck on Deacon, but a penalty kick was the obvious decision, and LOWTON banged the ball past Imrie.

TOWN'S BEST TIME

It was a little while before the Town halves got the measure of the visiting forwards, and there were more menacing advances, but eventually the Town began to open out, and when they got going the Wolves' defence knew all about it. For quite fifteen minutes the Wolves had to exert all their energies on defence, and fine play by Rennie and Tait led to sharp attacks, but invariably one of the Wolves slipped a spanner among the cogs at the critical moment. Rennie went close with a fine effort, and two or three times Yardley nearly busted his way through. Slicer got over some nice centres, and only by shrewd packing of goal did the Wolves survive. When they did get away, however, the Wolves' forwards were always troublesome, for they manoeuvred with confidence, and their passing was precise and well-timed. Once Tait made a sinuous dribble and was brought down violently by Lumberg a foot outside the penalty area. Another stride would have seen the inside-right clear of opposition. M'Nestry could not add the polish to the delightful work by Tait and Yardley, who were prominent in many onslaughts, and then Rennie outwitted the opposition and gave the centre-forward a great pass, from which he went through and shot past the goalkeeper as he ran out; the ball missed by inches only.

DOWN AT THE INTERVAL

There was no holding the Town in midfield, but they could not consume their skill, and as the game advanced the visiting defenders grew more confident, but they never hesitated to land the ball among the crowd at a sign of danger. Time after time the visiting halves were beaten, but the ball was scrambled away before Whittaker was troubled. Kingham had more than he could deal with from the visiting left wing, and was not kicking well. Hodgson saved the situation when Barracough got through, and the winger was guilty of a very bad foul on the Town captain. Hodgson had to be helped off the pitch, and was away five minutes. During his absence the Town got going again, and M'Nestry's best bit of work was frustrated luckily by Lumberg, who kicked the ball off the winger's toe when he was on the point of shooting at three or four yards' range. The Town continued to hold the upper hand until just before the change of ends, when Hartill was given a clear run through, but his shot went straight to Imrie, who gathered while on his knees and got the ball away.

WOLVES 1
TOWN Nil

The first threat after the re-start came from the Town, and they seemed determined to make a bold fight for equality. The ball was constantly in the Wolves' territory, and passed and re-passed across the goal. M'Nestry and Tait each sent over well, and Slicer also put across some useful stuff. Whittaker was well protected, however, though he had to run out twice, and once punched away neatly. After bright work by Slicer the ball went to the right, and Tait pushed through for Yardley to take in his stride; he tricked Lowton, but could not get round the big fellow quickly enough to turn the movement to advantage. Then the Wolves took command, chiefly by keeping the ball well away to the wings, and when Barracough sprinted past Kingham and middled splendidly a goal seemed certain as the ball rebounded from Bottrill, but Imrie managed to push it aside, and

McGinnigle, who had fallen back, kicked off the line. This was a narrow escape.

WOLVES' MAGIC

It was the beginning of a wonderful period for the Wolves. They manoeuvred and positioned with magnificent judgment, and there was magic in their heads as well as in their feet. They were frustrated only by the exceedingly judicious covering up of McGinnigle, Hodgson and Fraser, who did glorious work in arduous moments. Hodgson, who had been feeling the effects of treatment in the first half, began to hand it out, too, and brought out Hartill and Phillips. After one or two skirmishes by the Town there came a puzzling movement by the Wolves' wing, in which Deacon was the leader; the ball was sent into the middle, where PHILLIPS took possession and dribbled through to bang the ball into the net from close range. It was a fine goal, but there was a shout of joy when the Town went straight down from the kick-off, and a visiting player touching the ball, and Rennie, Tait and Yardley got through for the inside-left to fire in well, but Whittaker saved at full length. More hustling work on the Town right wing promised well, but fizzled out. Then Hartill was crowded out when he seemed to have the goal at his mercy. A moment later he netted, but was offside.

CONSOLATION PRIZE

The Town were opening out again, and gave some trouble, but the visitors defended finely, and the ball travelled from end to end at a good speed considering the state of the pitch, which was very heavy indeed, especially in the middle. Yardley once gave M'Nestry a beautiful pass, but the winger did not return the ball, Lumberg foiling an attempt to dribble through. There were brilliant line attacks by the Wolves, in which the ball travelled from player to player, but Kingham, now playing much better, got in the way several times and cleared; then Imrie elicited a great cheer when he dived at full length and saved a grand shot by Deacon. The Town left wing were started on their way by Fraser, who was playing strongly, and after passing and re-passing on the left, Rennie whipped the ball into the middle for YARDLEY to dash in and score a splendid goal. The Wolves were not making any further slip, however, and wisely kept the ball moving. In the last minute there was a rush by Tait and M'Nestry, and a scramble in the Wolves' goal-mouth found four or five players, including Whittaker, all in a heap on the ground. The Town made desperate efforts to force the ball through, but it was scrambled behind after hitting the post, and the corner awarded was fruitless. That was the last incident.

PLAYERS

Imrie has had much harder work in many home games, for the Wolves did not prove the terrifying marksmen we had been led to suppose. He made several good saves, and could not be blamed for the shots that beat him. Kingham was very much off colour, and did not seem to be able to kick a good length or to get the right tackle for a long time. He improved in the second half, but never touched his best. Hodgson felt badly the serious jabs received before the interval, but played a good game, and was the more reliable defender. McGinnigle again won high eulogy for his splendid display. On the muddy ground he was always going strongly, and his tackling was first-class. It was something to be proud of that none of the Wolves' inside forwards could score. Fraser also did well after he had found out some of the tricks of Phillips, but he and Kean were better in attack than in defence. The halves played quite well on the whole, and certainly gave their forwards a fair service.

ATTACK

Yardley put forth all he knew, and again merited better support. Often he was striving alone against a sturdy defence, and had little luck with his shots. Rennie played much more stoutly than usual, and showed excellent initiative, while Tait was a glutton for work and made some nice passes. M'Nestry had an off day, though there were two occasions when he nearly scored "off his own bat" and Slicer gave Rhodes and Lowton anxious moments. All were good individually but it was in combination and positioning and in getting the ball quickly into the middle that they failed, while the shooting was not so prompt as it should have been, hence the comparatively easy afternoon for Whittaker, though his backs would not care to admit that they would have enjoyed more work.

Lowton was he best defender on the field, his work throughout being splendid, and all the halves did well. They were not only capable of giving assistance to their backs, but invariably moved up just the right space behind the forwards, for when the Town backs cleared the visiting halves were usually there to receive and to send the ball back. This was especially noticeable in the second half. The forwards were a fine combination, and if Phillips and Barracough shone most it was because they were so cleverly aided by the inside men or the half-backs.

Mr. Jelly handled the game remarkably well, and refused to countenance nonsense from any player.

The revised figures of attendance were 16,965, and receipts £1,384 1s. 2d.