

SOUTHEND'S LUCKY DAY

LUTON'S BRILLIANT EXHIBITION AT THE KURSAAL

Weak Finishing The Only Trouble

(By CRUSADER)

SOUTHEND UNITED 1
LUTON TOWN 1

SOUTHEND.—Whitelaw; French, Robinson; Johnson, Wilson, Pike; Crompton, Jones, Shankly, Donovan, Clenshaw

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

Referee.—Mr. A. J. Jewell, London.

ONLY one thing was needful at Southend on Saturday to complete a perfect day for the handful of supporters of the Town—good marksmanship. If a tithe of the good chances had been taken they would have won by the best score in the League for that day. For months I have hinted or directly stated that there was an absence of team work. Well, we had it to our hearts' content at the Kursaal—in mid-field, whether playing against the strong breeze or with its assistance—if it were a help—the Town played football that was a delight to watch. Time after time they swept through the opposing lines, and the crowd held its breath as it waited for the crowning shot. Then followed shouts of relief, for the Town forwards could not find the mark. To say they had at least three shots to each one for the other side would be an under-estimation, and very easy chances were missed by all the inside forwards. Yardley and Rennie were off the mark, and Tait had no luck at all. Now and then Southend made a desperate sally, but found the Town defence back to its best.

STRONG HALVES

With the wind at their backs the home side made the pace early, and Imrie had a reminder that he must not hang on, for he was tackled very quickly by Shankly and Clenshaw twice within a couple of minutes of the start, when he had taken the ball easily from long shots. The re-arranged attack of Southend promised big things by the way they went to work, and for some minutes had the better of the exchanges. The slanting breeze kept the ball very much on the Town's right flank, and after a time there was a lot of beautiful football by Kean and his right wing. It was good to see the forwards begin to fire at goal from a decent range, too, and after one or two efforts Tait made a brilliant drive which scraped the top of the upright as it went over, with Whitelaw in a false position. Thus early Miller was prominent with splendid constructive play, and it was the fine understanding among the middle men, their alertness in tackling and clever passing to the forwards that kept the Town on the offensive.

SOUTHEND'S LUCK

On one occasion the ball was brought all the way up the right wing by perfect passing among Kean, Tait and M'Nestry; it was Kean who sprinted to make the centre, but he was beaten by the ball striking a knurl of turf when the whole of the defenders were drawn out of position and Yardley and Rennie had the front of goal to themselves. When the home forwards got going, thanks to the big kicking of the backs, they wanted to send Shankly through on his own. He was willing enough, but the crowd grew very excited as Kingham or Hodgson waited for him to turn up, and then calmly took the ball from him. The home assaults were spasmodic, and play was continually in the Southend half. Wonderful footwork all along the front line once found Yardley perfectly placed for M'Nestry's centre, but he missed when a tap would have put the ball into the net. M'Nestry was doing a lot of shooting, and Whitelaw made good saves. In one fierce attack Whitelaw saved by diving full length into a ruck of players, but the ball came out, and three attempts to drive it home failed; Rennie slipped it forward, and it was going into the vacant goal when French dashed in and kicked off the line.

A GOAL DESERVED

Play had been very much in favour of the Town for half-an-hour, and then came a sharp burst on the right, in

which the defenders were completely outwitted, and Yardley was given a pass a few yards out with only Robinson and Whitelaw in front of him; he hesitated painfully, and then tapped the ball to M'Nestry, who took it on the run and crashed it past Whitelaw at lightning speed. It was a well-earned goal, and another was threatened immediately. Yardley hustled the defenders, and from his pass there came a terrific onslaught; Whitelaw dived across the goal and turned the ball round the post, and repeated the feat when it came back; then when it seemed that he could not possibly prevent Slicer scoring he just managed to throw himself across and divert the ball with the tips of his fingers, and it struck the upright and went out. Further pressure still found the Town unable to get the ball past the goalkeeper, all the forwards having very hard luck, while Miller also took a hand in the attempts. Southend's most dangerous moment in this half came when the right wing cleverly piloted the ball through and a hard shot from Crompton was saved by Imrie down on the line; Shankly and Donovan bowled into him and vainly tried to kick the ball from under him or to force him over the line, but he was strong enough to resist, and finally got the ball away. The lead was more than deserved when the teams crossed over.

LUTON 1
SOUTHEND 0

After a preliminary raid by the Town, in which Whitelaw had to go on his knees to hold one from Tait, the home forwards rushed to the other end, and, by wide passing, had the defence beaten; Donovan took possession and ran in, but Kean was wide awake, and kicked the ball off his toe as he was on the point of shooting from four or five yards' range. Then the Town forced play, and delightful passing had the home halves on the run. The backs played valiantly, however, and, time after time, saved the situation by desperate tackles. Three times Yardley tried to force Whitelaw to drop the ball, but the goalkeeper was well-built and withstood the attack. M'Nestry was getting centres over better than usual, and Rennie was giving him almost as much of the ball as he was giving Slicer, and both wingers showed good speed and craft. From one assault Rennie received and seemed certain to score, but he kicked the ground and the ball together, and the shot went slowly past the upright. Then Yardley, who had rushed out to the left, rammed in a red-hot drive, but Whitelaw cleverly saved against the upright, and then accepted a grounder from Rennie.

IMRIE SAVES A PENALTY

The Town halves compelled their forwards to keep on the move, and M'Nestry and Tait each narrowly missed, the latter's shot searing the bar. Whitelaw took another from Yardley, who was only a few yards out when he drove in, and then Rennie had a fine shot shave the upright, and just afterwards had all the goal to shoot at from four or five yards' range, but missed badly. There was a sudden change of scene, and the home left wing took the ball down. After a short tussle a few yards from goal Shankly shot hard, but, when the ball seemed bound to cross the line, Imrie dived and pushed it aside, and just afterwards he made an equally fine save in similar circumstances. The home left wing came again, and there seemed no immediate danger when Hodgson handled as Clenshaw centred. A penalty kick was awarded without hesitation, and French took the shot. It was travelling at a tremendous pace just to the left of Imrie, but he beat it down, and, when French dashed in to shoot again, Imrie flung himself on the ball; the impact of French's foot dislodged the ball, and JONES was on hand to shoot into the net and thus equalise.

TOWN PERSISTENCY

For a time after this the Town were holding the ball rather too long again, but were still the better side and doing much more attacking. Following clever

combination on the right wing, there was a hot struggle in front of the goal, and, as Rennie thumped in a fierce shot, a defender got in the way; he received the ball and a desperate colleague's foot at the same time, and the referee stopped play just as the danger was at its height. However, the Town left made the next attack, beautiful passing by Rennie, Fraser and Slicer, with Miller also taking a hand, forcing the home backs and halves right on to their goal-line. A lot of shoulder work and hard kicking failed to get the ball away very far, and Rennie had a hard shot hit a defender, the ball going behind. Again there was a scrimmage in the home goalmouth, when M'Nestry placed the ball well in front, but it was scrambled away by Whitelaw. The home goalkeeper saved his side repeatedly, but there was lack of a true shot with any real sting behind it, or the goal must have fallen. Another raid by the home forwards menaced the Town goal, but Kingham and Miller flung themselves in front of the onrushing forwards, and thwarted them, and, when Donovan received, he could only shoot hurriedly and too high. Imrie had a few shots to handle, and then the Town took up the attack again, but without success, and the end came with the scores level.

PLAYERS

Imrie had nothing like the work that fell to the home goalkeeper, but made three great saves. Kingham and Hodgson played magnificently, and gave the home forwards no peace. The positioning was very fine, and both kicked extremely well. To the halves, however, must go the big measure of praise for a brilliant exhibition. Kean and Fraser were right on top form; they tackled splendidly and never wasted a ball. The passing was on the carpet, and it was worth something to see the other players taking up position, for they were always served well. Miller's recent improvement had justified his inclusion, and, under such conditions, deserves further encouragement. His play was always for the ball, and he passed remarkably well, through the centre or to the wings. There was no gap between forwards and halves, and the lines worked in unity throughout. Of the forwards, one could only regret that they failed in front of goal. Everywhere else they played magnificent football, the passing and positioning being a real treat to witness. There was not a man that played poorly in midfield, and they had the home halves on the rack. If I single out M'Nestry and Tait for special reference, it is to say that they were more effective than in recent games, because they did not try to do all the work. Slicer received several passes from Tait, as M'Nestry also did from Rennie, while Yardley distributed as well as ever. Alas! Jimmy could not get home a shot, and often seemed to lack the confidence to try his boots. Had he done so, he would have scored of a certainty.

SOUTHEND

Whitelaw was loudly applauded as he left the field, and he had much to do with the avoidance of defeat. French and Robinson were reliable backs, and the halves played nice football, but were often hopelessly at sea against the fine combination. Jones and Donovan were skilful forwards, and Clenshaw did very well, but Shankly was so well covered that he had few chances of making a shot, and the 5,000 spectators were not very kindly disposed towards him.

Mr. Jewell handled the game very well indeed, and it was a clean yet vigorous tussle that was well worth watching.