

HATTERS STILL SCORING

TORQUAY VANQUISHED AFTER GRIM STRUGGLE

Three for Tait

(By Crusader)

LUTON TOWN 6
TORQUAY UNITED 1

LUTON.—Imrie; Kingham, Hodgson; Kean, McGinnigle, Fraser; Bryce, Tait, Loasby, Rennie, Slicer.

TORQUAY.—Millsom; Fowler, Webster; Hewitt, Anderson, Smith; Birkett, Hutchinson, Clayson, A. A. Griffiths, Waller.

Referee.—Mr. E. R. Westwood, Walsall.

FEW of Luton Town's supporters would have cared at half-time on Saturday to predict a runaway victory. Indeed, a great number must have wondered whether Torquay were going to overcome the disadvantage sustained early on, and carry their colours to success. There have been games similar, but without such a happy ending. Less than half-an-hour remained for play when the home team rose to the high standard that characterised their performance last Tuesday, then their work was in sharp contrast to the marrowless exhibition of the first half. Though Torquay never yielded one iota, but kept striving might and main until the final whistle, they were overwhelmed in the third stage, and were fortunate that the score did not mount to double figures. The Town swept away the dullness that had settled among the spectators, and evoked outbursts of enthusiasm, and a wealth of compliments.

WENT DOWN BRAVELY

As the game wore on I became more and more convinced that the weakness of the Town was more apparent than real; the ground rather than the players was unresponsive. While the efforts of the home team were more scientific, the methods of the visitors, by no means lacking skill, were more effective, and better calculated to overcome the conditions underfoot. They met the ball with confidence, did not try to keep it on the ground when passing, and took good care to utilise the wings, which meant easier progress, for there was less mud than in the centre. Torquay played much better than their position in the League suggested, never hesitated to use their weight, were fearless to the point of daring, and on their first half showing almost deserved the lead. True, the Town had the better chances, but never seemed to achieve the thrustfulness of the visitors. Nor did Torquay diminish their energies when the Town had begun to master the conditions in the second half; they just kept on to the bitter end, and went down with colours flying.

LUCKY LEAD

The Town were rather fortunate to take the lead before the game was two minutes old. A brush without much bristle by the Town, then a nippy run by the visitors, and the ball came back on the Town left wing. Then Loasby took a pass up the middle and sent the ball forward to the left; SLICER raced on, but it seemed almost impossible that he could prevent the ball going behind; he did so, however, and, half-lob, half-screw, the ball came over the goalkeeper's head, swerved inwards, struck the upright and glanced into the net. The visitors soon put a lot of vim into their work, and Smith once floored Tait very heavily without attempting to play the ball. Then Bryce, well fed by Tait, galloped through and centred from the line, Loasby being just too short to accept, and Slicer just too late to beat Fowler for possession close in. For some time the Town held the upper hand, but the finishing was not impressive, and the visitors warmed to their work. Their first-time passing worried the Town backs, and for a period the United had the better of the game. Once the ball seemed bound to land in the net, as it eluded Imrie twice, and poor attempts at clearance by the Town halves and backs did not improve matters. When there was some measure of relief, the forwards or halves held on too long, and play became very scrappy.

HUTCHINSON HAPPY

The ball slumped on the stodgy ground, and if a player tried to dribble he was usually stopped through

the ball dragging between his feet or because his pass was not good enough. In one rousing movement, started by Rennie and Fraser, Slicer muddled magnificently, but neither Tait nor Loasby at close quarters could push the ball through, and when Bryce darted into the middle and worked right through he also got the ball stuck between his feet and could not master it before being dispossessed. Poor defensive work by the Town made the spectators impatient, for kick after kick was badly timed, and, as the visitors were infusing a lot of brawn into their work, the Town rearguard had more work than they wanted. In another assault Bryce managed to get the ball across, and Slicer took charge and had all the goal to fire at, but lifted the ball well over. Perseverance by the Torquay right wing eventually brought a goal, for after Birkett had once been stopped he got in a fine centre, and HUTCHINSON leapt above the crowd and headed a fine goal.

MILLSOM A WRESTLER

More scrambling work among the Town forwards followed, and though they often got within range there was not a really hard shot, while at the other end Waller two or three times centred finely, and once Imrie slapped the ball out as it came over from the left wing in dangerous fashion. The visitors were showing more nippiness in capturing the ball, and, with plenty of fierceness in tackling, and readiness to shoot, were ever dangerous. There was a raid by Loasby after Slicer had made the pace too hot for Fowler and had centred well. The Town centre-forward beat the backs, but Millsom got the ball; Loasby charged him and he dropped it, and Loasby, though knocked out of his stride, scrambled up and was on the point of shooting when Millsom clutched him round the middle, and, though Loasby got the ball, he could only turn it wide. There were loud appeals for a penalty kick, naturally, but the referee would have none of it, and soon afterwards signalled for the interval.

LUTON TOWN 1
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With refreshing energy the Town reopened, the left wing making headway, but they were repulsed, and the visitors went down for Griffiths to bang wide. Then Kean and Tait made a brisk flit, and Bryce was sent away. He could not round Webster, who conceded a corner. Bryce took the kick, and the ball was coming down near the farther post when TAIT and Slicer went for it heads up; the former got there and headed into the net. Torquay swept down on the left, and when Waller beat Kingham and centred Hutchinson headed in finely, and a goal seemed certain, but Imrie flung himself across and saved brilliantly. The Town were having slightly the better of the game, but the visitors were full of fight, and only fine work by the home halves kept them at bay. Kean was responsible for star work, and was always opening out the game and helping his wing to the attack. From one of his moves Loasby tried to bore through, but was held up by Webster, and fell; TAIT sprang in to take possession, and tricked three opponents to shoot into the net.

LOASBY GETS HIS

From this point the Town took command, and there were hectic moments for the Torquay defence. Loasby went close on several occasions, and all the forwards and halves were working together splendidly. Millsom made fine saves, and many shots sailed close. The visitors had to concentrate on defence, and though their wingers broke through now and then and gave trouble, play was in the Torquay half nearly all the time. Fraser was the prime factor in another movement. He turned into the middle, beating several opponents, and then passed to Tait, who transferred for LOASBY to score with a ground shot that gave the goalkeeper no chance. A rapid stroke

by the visiting left wing enabled Clayson to run in and shoot into the net, but the whistle had gone for offside.

TOWN ON TOP

There was glorious football after this. The Town toyed with the Torquay halves and backs, who, in spite of strength and resolution, were beaten again when TAIT got his head to a nice centre from the left wing. Shortly afterwards RENNIE had hard shots that went near, and another cleverly saved by Millsom, but the Town inside-left scored a wonderful goal from over twenty yards' range. He took the ball from the left, and, after a moment's juggling, fired at a tremendous speed, and the ball flashed past the goal-keeper, and a great shout went up spontaneously from the crowd. The Town were now playing grandly, and the goal had many escapes before the whistle sounded the end.

DEFENCE WORRIED

It is a long time since the Town backs were in such predicaments. Imrie must have been in a ferment half-a-dozen times in the first half, and not a few in the second. Neither Kingham nor Hodgson could make contact cleanly with the ball as consistently as usual. It was not that they did not position well, but when they hit the ball there was a lack of precision, and even the headwork was sometimes poor. In the second half they improved a lot, but not until late in the game were they reliable, and one was inclined to think that the Kenilworth-road end was the more difficult to defend. Imrie did not seem quite comfortable, but made two or three grand saves, one in the second half especially when a goal seemed a certainty. The halves suffered in some degree from a similar falling, but were the best department, and all three played finely, with Kean the master. Some of his touches in the second half were wonderful, and it was largely due to him and to Fraser that the Torquay halves and backs were so thoroughly beaten in the second session. McGinnigle had a tough handful in Clayson, but managed to hold him pretty well.

ATTACK

The forwards could rarely do the right thing in the first half. They outwitted the opposition in mid-field, but shrivelled up in front of goal. Several times the inside forwards obstructed each other, and had no mobility of the visiting vanguard. Rennie and Slicer were best in this period, and Rennie continued to show his proficiency in control throughout. Slicer responding finely. After the change of ends, however, Tait gave a great display, and did not hold the ball in impossible situations. He made fine passes, with the result that Loasby and Bryce had good chances, and the winger put over many dangerous centres, while Loasby did not have much luck. Tait fully deserved his hat trick, and the crowd were immensely pleased that his courageous work for once met with something like an adequate reward.

TORQUAY

For the visitors Millsom kept goal very well, though deceived by Slicer's scoring effort. His backs never flagged, worked might and main throughout, and kicked very strongly. The halves were vigorous and showed good powers of recovery, but were eventually overrun. The forward line moved with remarkable sprightliness, and even when the Town had a winning lead the visitors were still trying to get goals. The wingers were speedy, and received good support from the inside forwards, and Clayson was a dashing leader, but the best of the five was the former Town player, Hutchinson, who has improved with experience, and has ideas as well as dash.

There were 5,778 spectators, and the receipts were £318 14s. 10d.