

TORQUAY'S TRYING GAME

LUTON WIN AFTER STRENUOUS STRUGGLE

Tait's Pluck

(By CRUSADER)

LUTON TOWN 2

TORQUAY UNITED 1

LUTON—Harford: Kingham, Mackey, Kean, McGinnigle, Fraser; Mills Hutchinson, Tait, Rennie, Rowe.

TORQUAY—Maggs: Tennant, Tapp, Anderson, Martin, Robinson; Birkett, Orr, G. H. Stabb, Hutchinson, Bird.

Referee: Mr. J. M. Wiltshire, Sherborne.

WHILE LUTON TOWN enjoyed the greater share of the game, TORQUAY UNITED showed great pluck and pertinacity. The crowd were very much concerned about Tom Tait, and before dealing with the play I want to state these facts:—

From Sunday to Friday inclusive Horace Pakes worked on Tait's injured knee for hours every day. On Wednesday Tait was sure he would be fit. On Friday he had a thorough test on the field, using the injured limb particularly in kicking the ball, sprinting and turning, and eventually he declared that he was quite all right and could feel no ill effects. Mr. Wightman pointed out that only Tait himself knew whether he was fit to play, and the player said he was quite satisfied that the knee was right again.

This should be made clear, because rumours spread thick and fast that the player and the trainer had declared he was not fit.

The injury sustained during the course of the game had nothing to do with the knee. It was a very bad ankle injury, and is likely to take some little time to heal.

In justice to the Town manager, trainer, player and all concerned, these facts are emphasised.

NORTHDOON'S OPPOSITION

The game was quite different from that at Griffin Park the week previous, and I think the reason was simply because the visitors took the field determined that the one thing they must do was to prevent Luton settling down to orthodox football. Whatever we may think of that type of game, it almost succeeded, and to that extent it had its value. The better class of football came from the Town, but the forwards were thrown out of gear, first by the uncertainty of Tait's condition, and secondly by the grim methods adopted by the United's defensive elements. Several times the whole of the United halves were lined up with the backs, making five backs all strung out in a row, and yet their forward line was more of a line than the Town's, so that when the men in the rear had frustrated the danger there was an effective carry-on in their front rank. It was not always good football, perhaps, but I am not going to lose sight of its profit. Torquay came very near to creating the biggest surprise of the League.

TAIT THE TRIER

They were not long before they gave a glimpse of their mettle, for by strong kicking from behind, and swinging passes in front they taxed the resources of the Town rearguard. It is true that Harford had not a lot to do immediately, but he must have felt more than a little relieved when Kingham managed to get back once and sweep the ball away from almost off the goal-line. The sharpness of the assault energised the Town, and it was Tait who brought the first cheer, for he refused to be bundled off, and got through to drive in hard and low: the ball struck the goalkeeper; Tait again pounced, and his shot dropped on to the bar, and a scrimmage ensued during which someone handled, and a free-kick gave the visitors' defence a breather. Play became very fast, but there was not among the Town forwards the understanding they had shown at Griffin Park, and Torquay never dallied in their tactics or clearness. Though the Town had the balance of play, the visitors were so persistent that they were very dangerous when on the move, and there was a gasp when Birkett suddenly swept on the inside of Mackey and Fraser, and took deliberate aim wide of Harford's left hand: the ball hit the foot of the upright and came out.

More vim was infused into the Town's work now, but Tait was obviously slowed up by the heavily bandaged knee and could not get up with the ball quick enough to outwit the Torquay defenders, who played strongly. Then came a severe disappointment, for Rennie banged the ball right across the ground; Mills seized and lifted it into the goal area, and Tait made an heroic attempt

to force a way; twice he was fouled badly, but it was only at the second time, when Tennant recklessly felled him, that the whistle went for a penalty kick. Both Tait and Tennant were "out," and there was some delay while they were attended by the trainers, and then removed to the rails. Meanwhile the crowd called for Rennie to be given the penalty kick; he had fallen back, evidently not desiring the job, but Fred Kean insisted, and Rennie took the kick. He shot low, but almost straight, and Maggs got in the way; Rennie again got to the ball, but Maggs brought off a brilliant save, and the hectic scene was ended when Martin booted the ball out of danger. The Torquay goalkeeper's hand was damaged, and there was another halt while he received treatment.

HUTCHISON'S FAULT

Both Tait and Tennant returned after a few minutes, but were crippled, and the former especially was scarcely able to walk. However, he kept well up, and in one attack his challenge to the defenders resulted in the ball going straight to Hutchinson, who could have trotted the ball through, but he shot at once, and Maggs was able to save by throwing himself at full length and turning the ball round the post. To the interval the play was more spirited than scientific, and Torquay made one or two dashed efforts, and were as much in the picture as the Town, and the change of ends came without score.

LUTON Nil

TORQUAY Nil

During the rest it was decided that Rennie should lead the attack, with Mills at inside-left, and Tait at outside-right. Rennie was quickly noticeable for good shooting efforts, one ball landing in the side net at lightning speed, and another flashing across the goal-mouth. Then Martin refused to leave him, and even when the ball was nowhere in the vicinity of the Torquay goal, Martin was walking about close to the Town forward. It was safety first, and was excusable. Maggs made several good saves, for the Town were keeping the game open rather more than in the first half, but their superiority was largely due to the strong work of the middle line, and the forwards were ill-balanced and had little snap. McGinnigle was dribbling up the middle when violently laid out by Martin, but the referee simply stopped the game and then dropped the ball to restart business. There was more security in the Town defence than hitherto, and Mackey and Kingham were prominent with stout work, though once Stabb made a fine effort, a brilliant drive skimming the bar and hitting the iron net support.

MAKING AMENDS

Just afterwards the visiting right wing, perhaps the best little combination on the field, made a raid, and after Harford had fisted out a shot, Orr tried to head in from close quarters, but Harford just managed to get to the ball and push it out. This was the prelude to the first goal. Mills who was doing a lot of dodging about and giving some trouble to the opposition, swung the ball out to the right, and Tait bravely struggled on to beat Tapp and then passed squarely across goal for HUTCHISON to dash in and score easily. When the ball was on the ground the Town were always masters of the situation, and had there not been too much dawdling and trying to beat twice the same man more goals might have come quickly, for the visitors were hard pressed. However, chances were lost, and ten minutes of more or less even play ensued before the second goal came. Rowe received from Mills and then sent the ball well up the middle; HUTCHISON took possession, cleverly beat Martin, and shot hard and true as Maggs came out. It was a splendid goal.

Torquay, however, only wanted a little encouragement to take a chance, and within a minute of Hutchinson's second goal they got it. McGinnigle nodded the ball down to Kean, who gently turned it to Kingham, but the latter failed to time it or to read Kean's intent, with the result that the ball went to Bird, who was away with it like a shot. The movement took the Town defenders by surprise, and when Bird centred STABB had only to shoot to beat Harford. Torquay fought harder than ever in the closing stage, exerting all their strength and gave the Town halves

and backs plenty of "stick," although in a fair manner. However, the defence withstood all these efforts, and when it came to cool and calculated movements the Town had the better chances. Maggs made two or three good saves, but just before the end he was lucky, deservedly lucky. Rennie met a centre that came awkwardly, about hip high, and was right through when Maggs dashed out and smothered the shot that must, otherwise, have scored. So ended a hard and often exciting game.

MACKEY'S PROGRESS

Harford seems to be keeping goal better than ever, for he had some difficult moments in spite of the fine covering by Kingham and Mackey. Both backs played well, and were challenged much more vigorously than usual. Mackey again gave nothing away, and was little inferior to Kingham. He had discovered the wisdom of kicking hard when danger is fiercest, and it was good to hear the crowd giving him encouragement. The halves did not play so well, perhaps, as in previous games, but it is always difficult to check the sort of game Torquay play, and McGinnigle again did well, though not so conspicuous as at Brentford, while Kean was invaluable in outwitting the heavy battery of the visitors by thoughtful touches and tackling. Fraser also had a lot to do, for he met a venturesome winger in Birkett, who was not always fair in his methods.

What should be said of the forwards? It seemed to me that Tait should not have played, but with so little reserve to draw upon, what could be done? The only players not in use were Imrie, Hodgson and Lives, all three crooked. The marvel to me was that Tait could be made even as fit as he was, considering the nature of the injury sustained at Brentford. Handicapped though he was, he was a big factor in the meagre success of the Town, and it is to be hoped that the new injury will be cured as quickly as the first, though that is very doubtful. The others were patchy, sometimes doing really clever things, and at others being out before they could get on the move. Not one of them touched his best, but they will not often run up against such awkward methods as Torquay's.

TORQUAY

It should not be imagined that Torquay's game was belittled. If any team could be sure of making such a fight away from home every time the same tactics would be more common. Few, however, have such physical proportions as the United. They are about the biggest side in the Division, I should think. Maggs was lucky, but deserved to be, and made many fine saves. Tennant was the more reliable back, though both went into the game with grit and dash. The big man, however, was Martin, who must be one of the finest pivots in the League. He has the right frame, any amount of zeal, and if he could support as well as he sustains he would have few equals. His colleagues were hard workers who did not tire. Birkett was the pick of the forwards, and Hutchinson was always prominent when the ball came his way.

There were 8418 spectators, and the receipts were £475 3s. 8d.

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There were 8,418 spectators, and the receipts were £475 3s. 8d.