

CAPTAIN'S COURAGE

SAVED LUTON FROM DEFEAT AT HOME

An Exciting Finish

(By Crusader)

LUTON TOWN 1
NORWICH CITY 1

LUTON.—Imrie; Kingham, Mackey; Kean, McGinnigle, Fraser; Mills, Nelson, Tait, Hutchison, Rowe.

NORWICH. — Robinson (Robert); Thorpe, Smith; Robinson (Bernard), Williamson, Lockhead; Ramsay, Scott J., Burditt, Bell, Murphy.

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

ONCE more we saw Luton Town lose a valuable point because they were beaten by shock tactics at the start. For nearly half an hour Norwich were the more likely winners, though they were not the cleverer side. They began with such good spirit, speed and vigour that the Town could not settle down and although there were as many chances to the home team as to the visitors in those early stages, fear rather than hope predominated among the Town supporters. It is true that the City were none too scrupulous, and that they took advantage of a very lenient official; they committed more

offences than any team that has been at Luton this season; they gave away more corner kicks; they were all out to win, and showed it by their courage and zeal, even if they infringed indiscreetly. I do not care to say so, but there is no doubt that the Town only began to get a grip of the game when they began to give back some of the hard-hitting stuff that characterised the City.

ROUGH PLAY

There have been several games this season in which the Town have put up with a lot before one or two of them have started reprisals, and it does not require all the fingers of one hand to count the players who do refuse to take for ninety minutes as much as opponents care to give. Perhaps if they had begun from the kick-off to hack and trip, as some of the City players did, there would have been a quieter game, but things went from bad to worse, and the referee did not see half a dozen offences by players of either side that might have merited marching orders. In the later portion of the

first half there were fierce fouls, and a succession of free kicks against the City such as would have justified the official in administering a general caution. Apart from the delinquencies the play of the City, especially in the first half-hour, won admiration. They were quick on the ball, and swung it about in a manner which quite disconcerted the Town defenders. Unfortunately, they discounted many brilliant moves by rough play, and evoked as much disapproval as applause from the crowd.

A WELL EARNED GOAL

The goal they obtained after twelve minutes was well deserved, and was the culmination of persistent attacks. Their play was a contrast to that of the Town, who were sluggish, holding on to the ball when release would have found the City defence scattered. The right wing had attacked two or three times and refused to be thwarted, and just when two strong efforts had been beaten off the ball was swung back into the middle, and BURDITT did not wait to place it, but shot first time, and Imrie was well beaten, though probably he did not expect the shot. Had Tait done the same in the next minute, after Mills and Rowe had carried play to the other end, there might have been an equaliser, but he tried to run round Thorpe and was beaten, the ball going out of play. Gradually the Town began to get the upper hand, though the visitors never failed to strike hard when they got going, and the ball travelled from one end to the other at a great pace. Though the Town had as much of the ball, and did more attacking, they seldom shot or centred so promptly as the visitors, consequently the Town defenders had more work than the City rearguard.

FIERCE ONSLAUGHT

As the interval approached we found the Town right on top in the general play, and the City were forced to defend desperately. Robinson did wonderful work in goal, and got at shots that seemed bound to beat him. Once, however, he was lucky, for the ball, headed in by Tait from Rowe's centre, seemed to be well over the line before it was scooped out by the goalkeeper. The referee hesitated a moment, but did not give a goal. A series of corner-kicks ensued, and for five minutes the Town forwards and halves were forcing play in the City penalty and goal areas, and the excitement was so intense that the referee called a policeman to come and stand near the City goal, though for what reason was not clear. The goal escaped luckily time after time, but eventually relief came, and then the City showed what to do with the ball when they got going. They swung it about from wing to wing, and Murphy darted in and drove in a splendid shot which Imrie cleverly turned round the upright for a fruitless corner. The Town should have been on level terms instead of a goal behind when they crossed over.

CITY 1
TOWN 0

Whether there had been any lectures or not during the interval I do not know, but there was not so much rough stuff when the game was resumed. The Town took command very quickly, and they certainly had eighty per cent. of the game during this half. They did well everywhere except in front of goal, and the City packed their goal area at every threat. Too much was left to Tait, however, and the City centre-half police-manned him thoroughly, while the backs remained very close to Robinson, and frustrated every attempt to get near him. He saved magnificently time after time. Indeed, for fifteen or twenty minutes the City scarcely saw the ball outside their half, although Ramsay and Murphy and Burditt waited, and when it came their way made good use of it. It was galling to see such a lot of good football by the Town halves count for nothing, and desperate scenes in the City goal-mouth were witnessed.

KEAN'S GOAL

So the game went on, with a hair-raising expedition by Ramsay or Murphy to give an occasional thrill of fear to the crowd. One could not but admire the fighting spirit of the City backs and halves. They held on grimly, and their swift tackling averted danger time after time when the equaliser seemed certain. Robinson did great work, though it cannot be overlooked that the Town forwards were consistently trying to walk the ball right through when shots might have done the trick. Shortly before the end, as in the first period, the Town halves came up to help the forwards, and the onslaught was fiercer than ever. Robinson was laid out for a time, and Thorpe also suffered when saving his goal during a regular scramble under the bar. Lots of spectators had left the field, and the referee had looked at his watch when the long-delayed goal was scored. Mills had added another to the long list of flag-kicks, and as he took it Fred KEAN closed in. The ball was repelled as it came under the bar, and fell among a crowd of players, but the Town skipper sailed in and by sheer force hurled himself into the crowd, and rushed the ball into the net amidst wild scenes. The whistle went immediately the ball had been centred, but that was perhaps as well for the City, as they were pretty well used up, and there had been only one team in it for a long time.

DEFENCE COMPLIMENTED

Imrie made some good saves, and Kingham and Mackey played very well at back. The latter certainly did better than usual, but there was a shakiness and uncertainty that is not good for the team, and it seems that will continue until Hodgson returns. Mackey has done remarkably well considering his inexperience in the position, and though I have felt all along that he was out of position, he has learned a lot. The halves were upset by the City's flying start, and were

some time getting into their stride, but once they did so they made theirs the better side. They would be better still if they were behind forwards who could maintain an attack by their own skill and energy, but all too often the ball is returned before the halves are in position. All three played splendidly, especially after the first half-hour, and there can be little doubt that but for the wisdom and courage of Kean another point would have been dropped, and the Town would have suffered their first defeat at home.

FORWARDS' FAILURES

It is hateful to be continually nagging about the indifferent forward play, but one cannot stress too much at this time, with the Cup-ties close upon us, the dire need of more thrustfulness and better shooting. Tait works very hard, but even he does not shoot half as often as he might, and there is seldom anyone close up enough to give him a hand when he is tackling strong backs such as those of the City. Little fault could be found with the approach work, so good is the feeding of the forwards, and Rowe did very much better than in past games. The lack of strength and co-operation at close quarters is the snag, and the remedy for that will solve practically all the difficulties.

CITY

Robinson kept goal magnificently for the City, even if he were lucky at times, and his backe were courageous in tackling, and powerful in kicking. The halves were relentless tacklers, and in the first half they supported their forwards splendidly, and were quick in recovery. The use of the wing forwards had much to do with their success, and the manner in which the inside forwards let drive at goal was a feature that the Town inside forwards might well emulate.

There were 5,500 spectators, and the receipts were just under £324.