

A GLORIOUS VICTORY

LUTON TAKE THE GILT OFF THE SPURS

Thrilling Cup-Tie Struggle

(By "CRUSADER")

LUTON TOWN 2

TOTTENHAM HOTSPUR Nil

LUTON.—Harford; Kingham, Mackey; Kean, McGinnigle, Fraser; Mills, Nelson, Tait, Alderson, Roberts.

SPURS.—Nicholls; Felton, Whatley; Colquhoun, Levene, Meads; Howe, O'Callaghan, Hunt, Hall, Evans.

Referee.—Mr. G. C. Denton, Northampton.

"NOW what about Wembley?" was the satirical query addressed to me when it was known that Luton Town had to meet the Spurs in the F.A. Cup Competition. The best reply to the jest may be the remark of Mr. Harold Wightman when he also heard the news. He said that, whatever the opposition, a team that could go to Oakwell and force a re-play would have to be reckoned with anywhere, but was cautious enough to add, "If we win this round we might easily have the bit of luck that would take us into the Semi-Final." As Semi-Finals are not played at Wembley, the modesty of his ambition may be judged, but the fact that the Town were able to cut a notch almost as good as that of Walsall when they met the Arsenal and enveloped London in a thick fog proves that the possibility does not require a vivid stretch of imagination. It is not yet the time to think about Wembley, but hope is more often a virtue than a folly, and the Town will not lower their banner until beaten out of the competition. Saturday's game proved once more that in the Cup Competition the gap between the leaders of the First Division of the League and the wooden spoonists of the Third Division is narrowed considerably, if not brought to vanishing point. True, Tottenham Hotspur are not even in the First Division, but are very close to the top of the Second, and, if one may accept the judgment of critics who see First and Second Division sides regularly, are qualified for a place in the First.

WON ON MERIT

Be that as it may, they tried to play high-class football on Saturday, and let no man say they were defeated by poorer class. It would not be true. The Town won on their merits, and no amount of equivocation can deprive them of their reward. Treacherous ground, certainly, but better class should be emphasised on a ground such as that of Saturday, for it meant a lively ball and odds in favour of the quicker side, as the Spurs are reckoned. The mere fact that the Spurs lost on a frozen ground at Manchester a week before was no excuse for surmising that they would lose on a similar ground at Luton. Moreover, the ground conditions were such as to enable the Spurs to pick and choose men that would be able to take advantage of the conditions. Luton were not in that happy position. They had to use the material they thought best, and their range of choice was more limited than that of the Spurs. A few weeks ago the London Club were able to secure the transfer of a player at a big fee, and he was in the side. Against that the Town found themselves deprived of the services of their best marksman. Such handicap as there was fell upon the Town, but they rose superior to circumstance, and truly won on merit.

SPORTSMEN ALL

I am not stretching truth in saying that the Town were the better side on the day that mattered. Perhaps the Spurs would win at a second meeting, because they were not very much inferior. One writer stated that the Town players went into the game caring not what happened to them, but the Spurs were different. The Town did their best, and so did the Londoners, and the victory went to the side that succeeded in the business of making goals. The strength of the Spurs, and we could well believe it after seeing the line in action, was generally conceded to be in

the swiftness of their attack. The strength of the Town for the last two seasons has been in their middle line, and it was just a case of the Spurs' attack being incapable of beating the defensive elements of the Town that turned the scale. Ever since the blank day at Barnsley I have held that if the same ability were shown in the Town defence there was no reason why the London side should succeed where the earnest and hard-fighting Yorkshiremen had failed. If the Town players were asked to choose whom they would prefer to meet again, Barnsley or the Spurs, I fancy they would choose the latter, because it was more of a football game, sportsmen though the Barnsley team were. The Spurs gave us one of the best and most sportsmanlike games we have seen in a Cup-tie at Luton for years, and I am perfectly sure they would acknowledge that the Town earned the same compliment.

A FINE GOAL

The little I have seen of the Spurs in recent years was sufficient to prepare me for a quick burst from the kick-off, and it came. However, they found the Town in the same temper, and both teams were hard at it within a minute of the start. The ball travelled quickly from end to end, but already it was seen that the Town forwards were in more determined mood than usual, and I am convinced that the claim for a penalty kick early on was just. Nicholls had been in action, and had lost the ball momentarily after saving from Roberts, and in a repeat attack one of the Spurs' defenders slipped down and appeared to push the ball with his hands, but the referee ruled otherwise. However, we had not long to wait for success, and it was a very fine goal. Mills had shown wisdom in trying to get the ball into the middle quickly, and after one or two of his centres had been accepted by the Spurs' defenders, he sent over another, not very accurately, but ALDERSON happened to sense the run of the ball, and while Levene was paying close attention to Tait, so that he should not get a chance, the Town inside-left rushed into the middle, and, without waiting for any settling of the ball, shot hard, meeting the ball with a sort of half-hook, and had the joy of seeing Nicholls completely beaten.

TAIT'S TURN

The exchanges continued in favour of the Town, and they kept the ball on the move splendidly, backs and halves giving good service to their forwards. The Spurs were also well served from the rear, but Harford had very little anxiety. The visitors depended a great deal on the dash of Hunt, but the mettle of McGinnigle and Mackey checked him consistently. One could understand that with a little latitude Hunt would be a disaster to any defence, but he was well watched and not allowed to get in a shot. On the other hand, the Town forwards had many efforts, and, if there was nothing very severe about the work he had, Nicholls was more in demand than Harford. After strenuous efforts by the Spurs, the Town right flank became busy again, and it was another centre by Mills that brought about the downfall of the Spurs' goal for the second time. Mills dropped the ball well into the middle of the penalty area; Levene, still anxious about TAIT, failed to get hold, and the latter forged in between the backs, and, from close range, shot past Nicholls. Two successes in such short time took away the breath of the Spurs' supporters, and they now relapsed into a serious quiet, while the visiting players were obviously taken aback by the state of affairs. For a long time the Town continued to have a decided advantage, and, by keeping the game open, they were always the more menacing.

'SPURS SHARPEN UP

Every man on the Town side was now playing with great spirit and confidence, and in no department more than in defence. The Spurs gradually drew upon their resources, and towards the interval made fierce assaults. Hunt was nearly through once when robbed by the combined attentions of Mackey and McGinnigle, and in a later effort did get close in, to lift the ball over Harford's head as the custodian ran out. Fraser, however, had wisely dropped back, and got the ball away off the line. Against that there was an occasion when Nicholls had saved and Mills tore in and made him drop the ball, but the biggest fellow on the field clutched it again before anybody else could get it, and sent it clear. Roberts also had a fair chance, and shot hard and low, but Nicholls turned the ball round the upright. Just before the breathing time a desperate assault on the Spurs' right wing brought a hard shot from Hall, but a defender got in the way, and then Howe seemed certain to score as he shot from close quarters, but Harford covered that end of the goal, and the ball struck his leg and went behind him, but Kingham was there again, and got the ball out. It had been a rousing struggle when the half-time signal was heard.

LUTON 2
'SPURS 0

In the early stages of the second half the Town, after a promising opening, fell away a lot, and were compelled to defend. The Spurs passed cleverly and centred well, but whenever the ball came into the middle there were defenders at hand. Though at times the Town forwards made headway and troubled the visitors' rearguard, they were generally watching their halves and backs repelling the Spurs. It has to be said that at times the best help was not given by the forwards, especially the extremes. Often they tried to dribble when there was scarcely room to trundle a tennis ball past an opponent, and this was only playing into the hands of the visitors. Tait twice tested Nicholls with high shots, and then there was a shout as O'Callaghan, from the inside-left position, dribbled quickly and shot truly, but Harford flung up his hands and diverted the ball on to the bar, whence it travelled to the left of goal for Fraser to clear. The Spurs fought desperately, and Levene was always prominent with forceful work. When the attack had spent itself there was a lot of midfield play, and the Town halves were admired for brilliant work. The Spurs had changed their tactics, and, instead of holding the ball so close, they lifted it about a lot, but it was all the same to the Town backs who covered up magnificently.

KINGHAM'S SAVE

It seemed as if the Town would go further ahead when a speedy raid on the right wing brought a centre from Mills, and Roberts, unmarked, had a good chance, but his elevation was too

much, and the ball sailed over the bar. The Town were playing more in their first-half style again, and Nicholls was called upon several times within a short period. His backs had to be on the alert all the time, and once Nelson, who had been doing very useful if not brilliant service, engineered an attack that required all the skill of Felton and Whatley to thwart. Levene did good work towards the finish. Time after time he held up the Town forwards and made a lot of ground before giving to his forwards, but Harford was safe when the ball came his way, and showed judgment in punching away, while his backs stood up to the gruelling very courageously. Still the Town defenders withstood all assaults, and gave attackers no peace. Evans, who had been unable to live up to his big reputation, was toiled many times, and could make little progress against Kean and Kingham. In a last despairing effort the Spurs' halves came well up to the attack, and there were exciting scenes as player after player strove to create an opening. Hunt had lost his sting, and it was a tough the king-pin had been with drawn. Nevertheless, the other forward showed much determination, and, with Harford out of his goal, the ball went to Hall, who crashed in a tremendous shot that seemed bound to score, but once more Kingham had wisely dropped back into goal, and he received the ball full on the chest and then kicked away. It was a great save, and was the last chance of the Spurs. The Town were on the attack when the final whistle sounded, though there was an amusing little incident a few seconds before the end. Everybody was expecting the whistle, and it sounded, and many rushed on to the ground, but the signal was for a foul by a Spurs' player, and play had to proceed. When the end did come there was a great rush for the Town players, who had almost to fight their way into the dressing-room to escape the attentions of the excited and delighted followers. It was also noted with pleasure that the Spurs' players shook hands with their conquerors as they left the field.

FORWARDS

And now about the players. Of the Town team, I think it can be said that there was never better team spirit shown this season. Fore and aft they played well together, and put in all they knew. Mistakes were made now and then, but most were excusable owing to the state of the ground, but occasionally in tactics. It was bad policy for the forwards to hang on in their own half when their defenders had just been hard pressed and the extreme wingers would have done better to have taken advantage of the disposition of the Spurs' backs. When they did so Tait was usually in readiness and caused much anxiety. Nevertheless, all played well. Mills centred much better, and he and Roberts did very good work against speedy and clever opponents. Tait led the line far better than at any time since he was injured some weeks before Christmas, and was more like the strong leader we knew at the end of last season. Moreover, he did not cling to the ball too much. Alderson was the brainiest of the line, and Nelson did much good work and shed his selfishness for the benefit of the attack as a whole.

HALVES

The middle men have played consistently well throughout the season, but excelled against a speedy and skilful attack. Kean was magnificent, both as a captain and a player, and it was delightful to see the old international outwitting the young international, Evans. Kean had to meet what some regard as the finest left wing in the country, and he himself returned to that power which won him the highest honours. Fraser was also a power, and paid much more attention to defence than usual. He did not leave his opposing wing very much, but found time to assist in attack, and even when injured in the second half, got through a lot of work. McGinnigle once more proved his immense value as a defensive half, and his grip on Hunt was a big factor in removing the sting from the Spurs' virile attack. Time after time the dour Scot intercepted with his head, and frequently took the ball from the toes of a finessing forward.

REARGUARD

The rearguard was sound. Harford made us blink two or three times perhaps, but showed admirable judgment in coming out to punch away, while he fielded safely, and got the ball away well. He owed a lot to the steady and unflinching methods of his backs. They were well nigh invincible at all times. Kingham played as well as he has ever played, his kicking being clean and well-timed and his tackling sure, while Mackey's magnificent strength and resolute behaviour held the opposition at bay. Though he may have something to learn yet in the way of positioning, Mackey is already a powerful back, and it will have to be a very clever line that can lower the colours of a defence so sturdy.

'SPURS

Nicholls could not be held responsible for either of the goals, and both his backs showed judgment and resource, though I did not think they were the equal as a resistant force of the Town pair. The halves played cleverly, and while Levene was held responsible by some for the second goal, I thought he was as good as any half-back on the field. Indeed, he Spurs owed a great deal of their second half advantage to his sterling work and he battled on to the end. The forwards were very dainty in much of their approach work, but seemed to rely too much on Hunt for the goals until it was too late. Hunt is a fine centre-forward, but was over-powered, and all the craftiness of O'Callaghan and Hall came to nought when they sent the ball to him, or, for that matter, to the wingers. Howe played finely all through, and usually did bright things when he had a chance, but, like his colleagues, found the strenuous opposition too much in the end.

The official figures of the attendance were 17,213, and the receipts £2,334 10s 6d. I confess I thought there were over 20,000 present, and was informed that the gates were closed but re-opened. I am now assured that they were not closed at any time.