

SPURS WHIPPED AT LUTON

MAGNIFICENT VICTORY FOR THE TOWN

(By Crusader)

WHEN I ventured to write just over a week ago that TOTTENHAM HOTSPUR team, having seen LUTON TOWN beat Barnsley, would not be so enraptured over their chances as were some of the writers, it was not without my book. True, the famous player, Percy Smith, who now manages the Spurs, felt that his lads would win, but he openly stated that it would be no easy thing. He left the final choice of the team as late as possible, and they were his very best, for he had fourteen players from which to choose when he arrived at the ground an hour before the start.

THE best the Spurs had were well beaten in a game that reflected credit on all engaged, for a contest fought in better spirit could not be desired. Now and then there was an infringement, but such incidents could not be counted on the fingers of one hand, and the referee's task was quite simple. Having criticised Mr. Denton on several occasions, I should now like to say that in this game he did very well, and for a change we had a couple of linesmen who seemed to know their duties thoroughly. That, of course, was a big help to the man in charge. There was an instance in the first half when the Town should have had a penalty kick for "hands," a Spurs' defender having slipped down and in his anxiety pushed the ball, but the referee was probably unsighted. At the other end an appeal by the Spurs was negatived.

IT is a long time since the Luton crowd had such a happy day. The host of supporters for the London team made all the noise before the start, and the Town's followers had their turn at the end. They showed it in no half-hearted manner, for they rushed on to the ground, and, in spite of the muscular efforts of the police, surrounded and carried some of the players to the exit from the field. This perhaps did not cut much ice with the seasoned men, for they know too well the fickleness of the crowd, but it is unusual to see such an outburst from the Town followers, and perhaps it could be attributed to the fact that they had been fed to a large extent upon the predictions and forecasts of London journals, none of whom could see the Town succeeding.

THAT the match was won on merit is generally admitted now by everybody, and none were more sincere in their praise of the game of the Town than the vanquished Spurs. They warily congratulated the Town players on their victory and on the manner in which it had been gained, and the match, if it does nothing else, should strengthen mutual admiration between the clubs. Some of the writers refer to the Town's style as merely kick and rush; it is true that they did not do so much frilly work as the Spurs' inside forwards, but that they could approach by clever passing was seen time after time. Indeed, they out-spurred the Spurs at their own game.

THE Spurs have a name for the manner in which they get into their stride at the start; quick, swinging passes that paralyse the unready defence, and they opened in this way on Saturday. I was more concerned with the way they would open up than with the later game. Hunt touched the ball to Hall, and the latter promptly flashed the ball right across to Howe, but there was a lot of pace as the ball came from the turf, and Howe could not get to it. The Town lost no time in doing the same thing, and matters were soon being fought on an even basis. Still, there was more virility in the Town attack, and, backed by sound halves, they struck back as strongly as the London side. I think it was the bright, open methods of the Town halves and forwards that took the Spurs by surprise early on, and made them realise to the full that they were up against as tough a proposition as they had encountered anywhere in their higher circle of League football. Be that as it may, the Town were the more aggressive, and Nicholls had been in action several times before the crowd went wild with joy at the first goal. Mills had shown commendable wisdom in centring promptly, and it was from his pass that ALDERSON tore into the middle and shot in his stride to beat Nicholls all ends up.

WE had not expected such an early lead, but after more battling there came another crisp movement that had the Spurs' pivot and backs in a tangle, and when Levene could not gather the ball, TAIT took it on the run, and by sheer force made his way right through to shoot into the net for the second and last goal of the match. Both were splendid goals, well earned by the scorers and by the team as a whole, for all had been fighting courageously against a clever side, as well as against a reputation for a speedy start from the mark. To the interval the Town had to fight hard to maintain their advantage, but the Spurs were equally hard pressed to keep out the Town forwards, and a goal at either end would not have surprised anyone. At the change, however, the lead was well merited by the Town.

THE second half found the Town having to defend hard, but it was very much according to plan. They had a sound lead, and were determined to keep it, and to leave no loophole for the handy Spurs. There were exciting scenes now and then, but as the minutes flew the Spurs seemed to recognise that they had met their masters, and the sting went out of their attack. Their best efforts came in the last few minutes of each half, and just before the final whistle they did get a splendid opportunity, for Harford was out of goal and not in the line of flight for the shot that came from Hall: Kingham was, however, and he stopped the ball and booted clear, and that was the last noteworthy incident of a very hard and entertaining battle.

HARFORD may not have seemed so confident as Nicholls, but he kept goal remarkably well. I like the manner in which he now comes out to punch away corner kicks and centres: he cuts them out before opponents can get a head to the ball, and this enables the defenders to collect. It would be better, especially from flag-kicks, if the forwards came a little farther back to be on the spot for the ball when Harford punches away. There were times in the game when he punched beyond the penalty area, but the Spurs' halves had followed up and were able to return the ball without challenge. Nevertheless, some of them, notably Alderson, did this, at times, and it was a big help to the defence when he shot the ball forward to Tait or to the wing.

KINGHAM and Mackey played magnificently throughout, for in spite of the brilliance of the Town middle line, the Spurs' forwards, especially Hunt, required a lot of watching, and both Kingham and Mackey filled the breach gallantly. I do not know when Kingham played better than in this game; he and Kean had the measure of a crafty wing, while Mackey was a tower of strength, his fine physical proportions and his judgment in positioning being of the best class. Neither lost any time in clearing, and helped their forwards by long kicks that cleared the Spurs' halves. All the Town halves were at their very best. Kean was once more in international form, and both in attack and defence he and Fraser consistently shone. McGinnigle was generally engaged in thwarting the thrusts of the Spurs' inside forwards, but he also did good work in attack, though it was as the foil of Hunt that he earned most praise. His headwork was great, and once more he stamped himself as a Cup-fighter of the best.

CONSIDERING the hard state of the ground, the forwards also played grandly, and if there were errors they were usually excusable. The only irritation I felt was when either Mills or Roberts, following a clearance by the defenders, would hold the ball and then turn back with it instead of hitting it forward for Tait, who was always on the prowl for a forward pass. Still, both wingers got the ball over nicely, and, if less artistic than the Spurs' extremes, they were more useful to their inside colleagues. Alderson played one of his best games, and no man mastered the treacherous conditions better, while Nelson also did very good work and was a forager all the time. Tait returned to something like his best as a leader, and showed fine pace. Like Alderson, he did not mind the going, and was ever a sore trial to the Spurs' rearguard.

NICHOLLS was a good goalkeeper, and both Felton and Whatley played nice football. I liked Levene in spite of the tendency to debit him with the responsibility of one or both goals. I thought he played a great game, and was outstanding in a line that had much skill. Little was seen of the brilliance of Evans, of whom one hears so much, but Howe was speedy and had good control. Hunt was almost blotted out after the early stages, in which he found himself up against a relentless opponent in Mackey, and a dour worker in McGinnigle, while O'Callaghan and Hall, though very clever in manœuvring, were given little opening for a shot.

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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.