

SWINDON FOILED

GALLANT DEFENCE AGAINST A DESPERATE SIDE

Imrie at His Best

(By Crusader)

SWINDON TOWN 1
LUTON TOWN 1

SWINDON.—Briggs; Stansfield, Seabrook; Cousins, Godfrey, Brathwaite; Wilkins, Scott, Stansmore, Brooks, Quinn.

LUTON.—Imrie; Kingham, Mackey; Brown, McGinnigle, Fraser; Mills, Hutchison, Rennie, Whalley, Rowe.

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

IN all my experience of travelling with Luton Town, I do not remember a match quite like this. The first half was fairly even, perhaps in favour of the Town on the whole, but the second half resolved itself into a struggle between the desperate Swindon side and the Town defence. It may appear an exaggeration, but it is positive truth, that exactly twenty-eight minutes had elapsed after the interval before the Town had sent the ball over the Swindon penalty line in that half. During the whole of that period the Swindon goalkeeper never had a goal kick, never touched the ball once. Indeed, not until he had to retrieve the ball from the net after the goal had been scored, did he ever touch the ball in the second half. I do not remember anything equal to that in any game of class football.

SWINDON DESPERATE

It will be gathered, therefore, that the credit for bringing away a point belonged generally to the defence, and there could be no word too good for Imrie, the backs and half-backs for the manner in which they faced a really grueling ordeal. Swindon were desperate; a win meant that they would still be above Newport, but as they dropped a point and Newport won, they have not eased their position. In view of their trouble, one could understand the fierce fight they made. They threw into the contest all the strength, determination and vigour they could muster, and there was rather too much of it, though perhaps it was excusable in the circumstances. When they had the slight slope in their favour and the breeze behind them, the backs and halves booted the ball as hard as they could into the Luton goalmouth, and then the forwards rushed in to try and force the ball home, but the Town halves and backs, particularly the latter, and Imrie stood up to it, and they at least deserved the point and the remuneration it carried with it.

HARD PRESSED

Fraser won the toss, and the Town were first to get on the move threateningly, but Rowe was pulled up for pushing. Wilkins soon made his presence felt on the home right, but Mackey compelled him to shoot wide. Hutchison was prominent in the next rally by the Town, and he swung out to Mills a fine pass that enabled the latter to run through and turn the ball in front of goal, but it was scrambled away. Fraser put in clever work, only for Rowe to be whistled offside, and when Fraser was fouled just afterwards the free kick was cleared. A similar award to the home side was of no advantage, and Mackey cleared strongly when the home right advanced. Neither team seemed able to control the ball well, and the breeze did not make for good football, as the ball was whirled about a lot. After Mills had failed to collect a very fine pass by Hutchison, the home left got the Town defence in a tangle, but Imrie cleared while Mackey held up the dashing Stansmore. There was a shout when Quinn raced past Kingham, and a moan when he lifted the ball much too hard and high for his colleagues. Whalley was frequently at fault in hanging on to the ball when a pass was required, and this was quickly turned to advantage by the home team. Again Hutchison sent the Town away, and Mills pluckily challenged the burly Seabrook and got the ball well past him, but Briggs dashed out and cleared.

HITTING BACK

Another spell of dalliance on the Town left resulted in the Swindon right getting away, and a corner resulted. Brooks heading wide from Wilkins's flag-kick. Mackey headed away a centre from Quinn, and Kingham cleverly dispossessed Stansmore. The Town then livened up, and the left wing, with Fraser backing, made a splendid run, and twice the ball landed in the Swindon goalmouth, only to be rushed away. Rennie was offside twice within as many minutes, but from a neat raid by Mills and Hutchison the latter centred unexpectedly, and Rowe only just failed to head through. A pretty passing bout all along the home front line ended with Quinn rushing past Kingham to send in a fine shot which Imrie pulled down from under the bar, but Stansmore had been whistled offside. Brown was again playing fine football, and he and Hutchison worked through. Rowe again heading wide when Brown booted the ball across. Slack play in midfield again enabled Swindon to attack, and in a desperate situation Imrie brought off three or four fine saves in quick time. A sharp assault engineered by Brown and his wing brought a hard shot from Mills, and Briggs turned the ball aside, but it was returned from the left, and Rennie banged over the bar.

BRIGGS TESTED

Brown shot wide after dodging three opponents, and in another essay by the Town forwards Stansfield missed his kick, and Rowe faulted by shooting hurriedly and too high when he could

have run in close. From a pass by Hutchison, Rennie brought Briggs down quickly to stop a fast grounder, and then Fraser drove in a long shot which the goalkeeper took well. Brown was applauded for skilful manoeuvring, and the Town maintained pressure, and Hutchison shot behind. An excursion to the other end failed when Kingham forced Stansmore to shoot wide, and McGinnigle kept an eye on the centre-forward when he tried to rush through again. The Town returned, and a first-time drive from Rennie skimmed the bar, and Rennie next combined with Whalley, and the latter slipped through and put in a good shot which Briggs managed to lift over the bar by a desperate effort. From the flag-kick the home goal was in danger again, but eventually the ball was got away. McGinnigle again robbed Stansmore, and Brown sent Mills through, but when Seabrook missed his kick the Town winger could only put wide. Whalley and Mills each had shots, and then came a nippy run to the other end, where Quinn presented Stansmore with a fine chance, but he headed into the ready hands of Imrie, and half-time found the score-sheet blank.

SWINDON 0
LUTON 0

Swindon resumed the second half evidently intent upon forcing the game and the issue. Stansmore was knocked off by Kingham as he was striving to rush through, and then McGinnigle had to concede a corner. Following the flag-kick, finely cleared by Mackey, the Town goal was jeopardised again, but Imrie brought off a splendid save from Scott. A misunderstanding between McGinnigle and Mackey gave Wilkins a chance, but when he centred Kingham flung himself at the ball and headed clear. Time and again Swindon swooped down wildly on the Town goal, but always there was some obstacle in the way, and the backs defended manfully. The Town forwards could not force the ball up the field, and they were tackled ruggedly and robbed easily. Nine minutes after the re-start there was a movement among the home inside forwards, and then WILKINS rushed into the middle, dribbled clean through without opposition, and shot into the net amidst great cheering. Quickly the Railwaymen returned, now bent on doing more damage, and all the work fell on the Town defence. Hutchison also fell back and did clever work in clearing, and the game was simply confined to the Town half, and chiefly in the penalty area. Corners were forced by each wing, but the ball was headed out, and Imrie made capital saves from most of the home forwards and halves. He saved brilliantly, following two corners, and then a goal seemed certain when Brooks raced right through, but finished by hitting the side-net.

LEVEL AGAIN

Mackey and Fraser in turn came well up the field with the ball, but the forwards could not carry on, and when the Swindon attack went off again, McGinnigle nearly put through his own goal, Imrie saving under the bar. However, after half-an-hour there came a shock for the home crowd. There was a mix-up in midfield, and Whalley was knocked out; Fraser snapped up the ball, made ground, and then gave Rowe a fine pass. The winger never lost control as he raced inwards, and was about seven or eight yards from goal when he shot hard; the ball touched Seabrook's foot as he came across, went on to the upright and then rebounded, and RENNIE was in the right spot and crashed it into the net, Briggs having no chance. Swindon now played even more desperately, if that were possible, but the Town defenders were cool and courageous, and frustrated them again and again. Imrie twice saved splendidly, and then Whalley returned after ten minutes' absence. Clever work by Rennie brought the Town's first corner just before the end, but the ball was got away, and the end came with the score as stated.

PLAYERS

Imrie played as well as he ever has played; he was very cool and quick, and anticipated every shot. The goal seemed would have beaten any goalkeeper. Kingham and Mackey also played grandly all through, kicking and tackling finely, and rarely doing a wrong thing. Brown again gave a good exhibition, and McGinnigle and Fraser were as good as usual. The forwards were not so good, and Whalley did not have a good match. Rennie had few chances, but made the most of the best that came his way. Hutchison did much clever work, though mainly in a defensive role.

For Swindon the whole team played desperately, and never gave up.

There were 4,500 spectators.