

VICTORY AT NORTHAMPTON

BRILLIANT RIGHT WING'S BRIGHT PART

Luton Town opened the season auspiciously, for they gained the points at Northampton after a great struggle. The goals were mainly due to the brilliance of the right-wing play, while in defence the work of Kingham and McGinnigle was the big factor.

At Northampton.

LUTON TOWN	3
NORTHAMPTON TOWN	2

Scorers: For Luton, TAIT (3). For Northampton, TOLLAND (2).

NORTHAMPTON.—Cave: Crilley, Dawes (F.), Dowsey, Park, Davies; Cherry, Boyle, Dawes (A.), Tolland, Wells.

LUTON TOWN.—Mittell: Kingham, Gibson; Kean, McGinnigle, Fraser; Pease, Martin, Tait, Rennie, Pearson.

Referee.—Mr. A. J. Jewell, London.

IT is a long time since LUTON TOWN had such a following, other than at Watford, as that which rejoiced over their success in the first match of the season on Saturday at NORTHAMPTON. There must have been fully 1,500 supporters, and they helped to swell the crowd to a size that compensated the Northampton officials for the subsequent result. It was the biggest gate the Cobblers have had for two or three seasons at least, the figures being 16,480, and the receipts £1,024. Special trains and motor vehicles of all kinds contributed, and before the interval some of the gates were closed, while the stand accommodation was over-taxed. From the point of view of the Northampton directorate and the supporters the only thing required to complete their happiness was a win; from the opposition's standpoint a victory was equally desirable, for it meant that a good start would be a spur to pessimists in the Luton area, and a good attendance on the first home match last night would be assured.

STAGGERING SPELL

In reviewing the match there are certain factors that should be clearly defined. It was the first introduction to Third Division football of three of the Luton team, and two of Northampton's; the ground was like iron, and so the ball was lively and inclined to play tricks; the heat, even at half-past six was sufficient to test the stamina of the strongest. It is a moot point whether the side that plays the more scientific game has the better chance on such a ground; personally I think the conditions, just the same as on a frost-bitten ground, tend to even the chances. I felt this more and more as the game progressed up to half-time, for while it was soon evident that there was more method and more artistry in the Luton eleven, the difficulty of controlling the ball on such a pitch was exceedingly difficult, and the speedy thrusts of the Cobblers were always invested with danger. There were two outstanding figures in the Luton defensive lines who were able to counter these attacks, and it was not until the second half that we saw the more skilful phase more profitable. Then, indeed, we had a spell that staggered the Cobblers, and put the Hatters on the way to victory.

HATTERS HANDICAPPED

Fred Kean lost the toss, and the Hatters had a big handicap in having to face the full glare of the sun. Northampton's tactics were soon revealed, and for some time they had the better of the game generally, keeping the Luton backs very much on the alert. Mittell was the first goalkeeper called into action, but soon we had what we expected from the Luton forwards, there being bright passing, and if the ball had not been so elusive Tait might have opened the score within a few minutes of the start. One effort, following a cunning glide by Rennie, all but beat Cave, who seized the ball when he was at full stretch. Against this was a dash by A. Dawes at Mittell, who was floored, but managed to hang on to the ball. A free kick was given against him for carrying, and there was no ground for his protest against the shoulder-charge from the Northampton leader. Fred Dawes was then laid out in a fierce tackle on Pease, and while he was being towelled Wells raced to challenge Kingham, and received such a smack from the hard-driven ball that he was down and out for some minutes. When they came back A. Dawes quickly tested Mittell with a fast low shot, and then there was a centre from Wells which was missed by friend and foe alike as it passed across the goalmouth.

The best movement of the first half-hour was a triangular affair by Kean and his right wing, and from Pease's touch forward Martin sailed in and tried to shoot hard, but the ball beat him, and went off his foot well behind. After a lot of give and take we had another clever spasm from the Luton right flank, and Fred Kean dashed up to receive Pease's splendid pass, but he also found the ball beat him when he tried a shot. In the remaining play before the interval Kingham and McGinnigle were to the fore with magnificent defence, and paid especial attention to A. Dawes, the danger-point. When the whistle sounded the players were glad of the rest, for they had played hard and fast football, and there had been few real chances.

NORTHAMPTON	nil
LUTON	nil

Immediately after change of ends Pease and Martin provided a thrill, and the winger beat Fred Dawes and then shot well, the ball striking the bar and going

over. Tait seemed likely to score twice in quick succession, and once he received a beautiful pass from Rennie, but fooled his shot, much to the relief of Cave. Then there was a scare at the other end, for A. Dawes darted through and seemed to have the goal at his mercy, but Mittell just beat him in a race for the ball and it rebounded from the goalkeeper as Dawes shot—a gallant save. The Cobblers then got a double barrel shock. Martin and Pease combined in a really bewildering bit of passing, and the winger finally tapped the ball in front of goal for TAIT to turn the ball into the net amid loud cheering. Almost from the kick-off we had a like movement, with Kean and Pease doing the chief work in approach, and again Pease obliged with a perfect middle, and TAIT again did the trick.

DID NOT KNOW THE WAY

For some minutes the Cobblers did not know which way the Hatters were going, and apart from a harmless long shot by Davies, which passed over the bar, the home attack could not get within striking distance. The Luton forwards, playing with splendid understanding, had the home defenders outclassed, and it came as no surprise when Kean, Martin and Tait once more bamboozled the defence, and the ball was swung across goal; Crilly and TAIT kicked at the ball together, and it landed in the corner of the net, Cave being helpless. Rennie was prominent, and he and Pearson now did good things, with Fraser emulating Kean and coming up to take part, and there seemed little likelihood of the Cobblers scoring. But the unexpected happened, and was largely due to the falling off in vigilance of the Hatters. From a free kick just outside the penalty area the ball was shot hard at goal and Mittell punched away, the ball going into the air and not too far away. It trickled about among a lot of players for several seconds, and then TOLLAND got in a smashing drive which had Mittell beaten all the way.

THE TONIC

This was a tonic to the Cobblers, and they played harder than ever, but the Hatters responded, and Rennie had hard lines with a characteristic shot that hit the bar and went over. The Cobblers came again, and the Hatters fell back on defence, but in a race to the other end Tait sent Pearson away with a nice pass, and the winger cut in, but when he might have had a shot he turned the ball inside where there was none to meet it. The Cobblers worked very hard, and with Gibson hobbling about, and Kean going off to attend to a damaged boot, play centred in the Luton territory. McGinnigle once saved the goal with a wonder tackle when Dawes was right through, and other Luton players were appealing for an off-side decision that did not come. It was a narrow escape. However, after some loose play TOLLAND came into the limelight again with a grand shot which beat Mittell all the way. Then Fred Kean returned, and play became more even, and was carried into the home half again, where it remained until the whistle went.

GREAT DEFENDERS

Mittell played well in goal, though he had not a great deal of work. His backs saw to that, but an injury sustained by Gibson in the first practice match slowed up the former Sheffield player, and he was severely handicapped, especially in the second half. On the other hand Kingham played one of his greatest games since he joined the Club. He was magnificent, his tackling never failing, and his kicking being clean and well timed. Over and over again he thwarted A. Dawes, and had far more trouble from Wells than from the centre-forward. In this he had a splendid lieutenant in McGinnigle, who was at his best, stemming attack after attack, and subduing the Northampton inside forwards time and again. Kean and Fraser maintained the high standard of last year. The flank halves joined in the forward work, while the pivot held a defensive role generally, and the policy paid well.

SKILFUL FORWARDS

The right wing excelled forward, and because Pease and Martin were so good much of the fine play of the left wing was overlooked. They showed remarkable understanding and in half-an-hour during the second half they led the opposition a rare dance. Pease enjoyed himself immensely, so much so that Tolland, just before the end, got himself into some slight disgrace by fouling the Luton player, and as a result he was rebuked and penalised. This was the only disagreeable incident in the game. Pearson had not so much of the ball as Pease, but he should make a straight course for goal. He and Rennie put in a few bright movements, and Tait was better than usual, being on the scene when there was a chance.

For the Cobblers Cave kept goal well, and Crilly was the better back. All the halves were useful, with Davies good until he became tired of chasing elusive opponents. In attack A. Dawes and Wells were best in approach, and Tolland will get more goals, for he is a fine shot.