

THE NERVE OF NEWPORT

DEPRIVED LUTON TOWN OF A VALUABLE POINT

Marksman Missing

(By Crusader)

LUTON TOWN 1
NEWPORT COUNTY 1
Scorers: For Luton, BELL. For Newport, HIGGINS.
LUTON: Mittell: Kingham, Mackey; Kean, McGinnigle, Fraser; Pease, Martin, Bell, Rennie, Pearson.
NEWPORT: Emery; Hugh, Robinson; Jones, Jordan, John; Reynolds, Wooliscroft, Millar, Higgins, Thomas.
Referee: Mr. E. Pinckston, Birmingham.

DID Luton Town accept their task against Newport County as too easy a business? If that question were asked once on Saturday night, it was repeated many scores of times, and then answered in the affirmative. I would reply in the negative, for the manner of their beginning was in itself a contradiction of the suggestion. Unquestionably, on the run of the game, there should have been a comfortable victory, but the inside forwards failed to consummate the general efficiency of the team. Newport knew quite well the nature of their ordeal, and in spite of the confidence of our old goalkeeper, Tom Gibbons, and the County manager, Mr. Hindmarsh, I believe the players had less confidence in their ability than they had determination to make the Town go all the way and earn whatever they won. Be that as it may, courage carried them through, and had their lucky star not failed during one twinkling movement by the Town attack, they would have taken away both points. Had they done so they would not have been grudging their success by the crowd. And here let me say that the solitary follower of Newport—there was but one, bar the officials and a Pressman—expressed after the game his appreciation of the "fine sporting crowd you've got." So those of you who recovered your hats after the equalising goal can tack on bright feathers. It is not too often that the compliment is expressed, whether the sentiment is there or not.

WHY NOT SOONER?

During the first half Newport gained confidence as the efforts of the Town failed to mature, and naturally showed elation when they secured the only goal before the change of ends. Incidentally every team we have met has scored, and I am not blaming Jim Mittell for that. Whatever may have been the opinion about some of the goals against him, only a reckless fellow would suggest that he had half a dog's chance on Saturday. There is a weakness somewhere in defence, though to put a finger upon it is another matter. The Town did the major part of the attacking in this session, but afterwards there was no comparison between the teams. It required all the will-power and energy, desperately employed as might be, to get square with the County, and without laying ones-self open to contradiction, one can well say that a little of that dynamic force that wrested from a grim defence the one goal shortly before the closure, would have been very acceptable in the early stages.

LOP-SIDED ATTACK

Once more Fred Kean found the opposing captain successful in guessing the turn of the coin, and as the sun was shining brightly, there was a slight disadvantage against the Town when they started towards the Kenilworth-road end. The Town threatened very quickly, now up the middle, next on the left, but the first big thrill came at the Town end, when the backs were drawn to the right by the persistence of Reynolds, and when the ball was flung over to the left, Thomas and Mittell raced for it, the goalkeeper just winning by a big effort, though he was in danger of being booted on the body as he took the ball. Already we found the Town attack rather lop-sided, for when Pease drove the ball across the goal-mouth there was none there to welcome it. All too frequently this state of things was witnessed, the left wing generally being too far behind the rest of the line. Newport were better in this respect, their forwards keeping up well, with the exception of Wooliscroft, who was doing the donkey work between halves and forwards.

THE BIGGEST THRILL

A very real chance was given to Martin after neat work by right- and left-wingers in turn, but the inside-right lifted the ball higher than even a full back is expected to do. He did it again soon afterwards, and thus marred both his own and others' skilful approach. The visitors kept the ball down very nicely, and it was their ability to do

so that brought one of the biggest thrills seen on the ground for many a day. Mittell took the only course possible when he rushed out and flung himself at the ball as Millar and Higgins were running in and the backs beaten; the goalkeeper arrested the ball for a moment, and before it could be turned into the net McGinnigle, Kingham and Mackey were all on the goal-line, and then one after another went down. There was a struggling mass on the ground, and friends and foes alike standing by to get a sight and a plug at the ball if it should come loose. After it had been lost to sight for some seconds, the whistle brought relief. Mittell was raised from the ground, where he had lain in pain, and was cared for by Horace Pakes. Then the ball was dropped almost on the goal-line by the referee, and there was a short, sharp tussle before it was rushed away. We breathed again.

PETTY INFRINGEMENTS

During the first half there were more free-kicks given against the County for petty infringements than were given against all the teams we have played this season. Handling, pushing, and an occasional trip, but nobody seemed able to place a free-kick good enough to ensure a goal. Following one attempt, however, Pease snapped up a loose ball and went through to centre, and there was a spirited attack on the County goal, culminating in a red-hot drive from Rennie, which seemed to hit the post and the goalkeeper at the same time. The Town were now going all out, and time after time swept upon the Newport goal, but could not find a good shot. In one assault an appeal for a penalty kick was raised by players and supporters alike, but was ignored, and after being penalised for handling, Vincent Jones effected a clearance when his confreres were beaten, kicking away from under the bar. It was Jones who brought considerable relief, for he controlled the ball well as he rushed up the field and took a shot at goal, but his aim was faulty.

THE GOAL

After a bad spell Newport woke up again, and gave trouble, but were beaten back, and the ball taken to the other end, where the forwards could not find the target at all. Mittell shone by his alertness in a strong rally by the visitors, and when it was repeated shortly before the interval whistle he was beaten. There was close play on the County right, and again the Town defenders slanted over to that wing; the ball came into the middle where HIGGINS was absolutely unmarked, and he promptly shot hard and true, the ball entering the net right away from Mittell, who dived in vain. This was almost the last kick before change of ends.

NEWPORT 1
LUTON 0

After a short but enjoyable interlude in which the Luton Band paraded and displayed the trophy captured at Skegness, the Town took up the running again, and it was quickly recognised that the County were not taking undue risks with what they had won. They drew their middle men back towards goal, and played an attenuated forward line. Pease and Pearson in turn eluded tackles and sent the ball in front of goal, but without effect, though Martin was once more out of perspective with his aim. Booting the ball first time the County halves and backs stayed off attack after attack, and now and then got the ball so far up the field that the Town defenders were caught out of position, and Mittell's job was no sinecure during these raids. In a terrific onslaught by the Town Emery's charge had a precarious time, and it seemed as though a goal must come, but somehow or other it was kept out.

The continuity of attack became almost monotonous, and no spectator left the field. There was a remarkable scene when Higgins raced through on the Newport left, and then tapped the ball in front of goal, but as Wooliscroft headed Mittell saved magnificently, and twice got the ball away when everybody expected to see it reach the back of the net. The relief for Emery was temporary, and the Town were soon at it again. Mackey, cheered on by the crowd, took a part in the attack, and landed the ball in front of goal, but while every Town forward did his utmost to break through, the visitors refused to yield. Emery made many good saves, but

the principal rescue work came from his backs and halves, who tackled fiercely and energetically. The Town forwards seemed to lose all conception of unity of purpose, and although as clever as ever in their individual footwork, did not combine well. Rennie, who had not shot with anything like his customary power, once had hard luck when a hard drive cannoned off a defender, and we were just saying that defeat stared the Town in the face when we were glad to see our forebodings misplaced. Mackey and Fraser had something to do with it, and when the ball was sent along to Rennie he deftly slanted it forward first time to BELL, who took possession, swerved round Robinson, and then shot past Emery as the goalkeeper tried to narrow the angle. It was a delightful point, and evoked general enthusiasm.

THE LAST SWEAT

During the remainder of the play the County goal had several narrow escapes. Kingham once rushed into the goal-mouth, and had the ball run kindly for him he could hardly have failed to score, but it ran away from him. Corners were forced, and Emery saved splendidly, while other shots struck the mass of defenders. It was their gladdest moment of the year for the County when the whistle was heard for the last time.

POOR MARKSMEN

Lack of penetrative power was the all-important reason that the Town did not win. Concentration by the halves on attack was the reason they so nearly lost. Had there been the necessary marksmanship in the front line to crown the work in midfield, so often brilliant, and always appreciated by the crowd, the policy of the middle line would have paid handsomely. Not one of the inside men could find the correct aim, and even allowing for the good fortune of the visitors, and equally for their magnificent rallying resources, there should have been several goals chalked against them. The hard grounds everywhere are responsible for the topsy-turvy results, and none are sighing more than the Town forwards for a difference in the conditions. But they might have found earlier on the dash and determination that saved a point. Pease was perhaps the most effective, and Pearson did well in spasms. The initiatory work of the inside forwards was good as ever, but they do need lessons in shooting. It was remarkable how often they got right under the ball, and the finishing was altogether different from their match with Torquay. Perhaps, however, there was an even bigger measure of difference in the defensive play they had to overcome.

DEFENCE

Little fault could be found with the halves, unless it were that they should have changed their tactics a little and given the ball more boot when they were on the retreat. It must not be overlooked, however, that the attractiveness of the midfield work is due in no small measure to the distributive work of the halves. McGinnigle was in fine form, while Kean and Fraser almost played themselves to a standstill. Kingham and Mackey found the opposition very quick on the ball, very elusive, and ever ready for a shot at goal, while Mittell gained more friends, even if he had less general work, than in any previous game.

COUNTY'S BEST

Emery gave a good display in the County goal, and his backs put up a wonderful resistance. They and the halves battled strenuously, coolly, and often with great skill; Vincent Jones was a better player than ever he showed at Luton, while the other two "J's" played fine football. The forwards were always dangerous when in possession, and would have made short work of Mittell's bonus had they been blessed with a tithe of the opportunities that fell to Luton.

There was again a very good attendance—10,072; receipts £559 0s. 11d.