

READING'S VIGOUR AND LUCK

LUTON LOSE AFTER A GREAT GAME

Kirkwood's Debut

(By CRUSADER)

READING 4
LUTON TOWN 1
Scorers for Reading: NEWTON (3),
McGOUGH.
For Luton: KIRKWOOD.

READING: Whittaker; Ridley, Rowe;
Johnson, Hayhurst, Wright; Butler, Mc-
Gough, Newton, Oxberry, Fielding.

LUTON: Harford; Kingham, Mackey;
Kean, McGinnigle, Fraser; Pease, Kirkwood,
Martin, Rennie, Pearson.

Referee: Mr. A. J. Spitte, Gravesend.

JUDGING by the number of Luton followers at Reading there was a strong feeling that the team was strengthened by the forward changes. Though the Town suffered a heavy defeat, I doubt if a single supporter regretted the journey. For an hour the Town gave a brilliant display of scientific football. They always looked like winning, until the mishap of the second goal. Even then there was little thought of defeat, but the third goal, the result of a very bad decision, took the heart out of them; probably it would have so affected any team. Until this set-back the Town had suffered a lot of rough and foul play without retaliation, but in the last twenty minutes, Elm Park was a bear garden. The Reading defenders, with the exception of Hayhurst, had been "handing it out" from the time the Town scored, and none could have been surprised when some of the Town began to retaliate, and they got the worst of that from the point of results, for Reading's last goal came from a free kick.

ABSOLVED

It is difficult to attribute any blame for the defeat. Above I have credited the second goal to Newton, for although Mackey's head directed the ball from Harford's reach, the full back could not be blamed for the goal. The need for a thrustful centre-forward was obvious. Martin is clever enough, but a line able to outwit defenders as cleverly and consistently as did the Town on Saturday—and in previous games—a forward of dash and vigour, and of real shooting ability, is essential. While that need remains the reward of brilliant mid-field play will never be gathered. I have said it over and over again, and it is the view of every follower, and of none more so than those who went to Reading. I am not blaming any single individual for the defeat. The whole team played well: they were entirely out of luck. Reading took advantage of the good fortune that came their way, as would any other team.

KIRKWOOD'S SUCCESS

Weather conditions were bad, but the ground was in good condition, and from the start the Town showed up as the cleverer team. Whereas Reading's advances were due chiefly to the hard booting of the halves and backs, and the speed of the forwards, the Town made headway by delightful combination, the ball being juggled among half-backs and forwards, and being kept on the ground. Reading took up the challenge, and there was much fierceness in their attacks, but there was more danger at the Reading end. The goal had escaped twice before it fell to a splendid effort. Following beautiful footwork by Kean, Rennie and Kirkwood, the latter sent out to Pease, who dropped the ball into the middle, and KIRKWOOD headed into the net, the ball travelling past Whittaker at great speed. Reading threw themselves into the fray, and the Town defence had to work strenuously. Harford made two fine saves, and both Kingham and Mackey frustrated attacks. The danger cleared, Reading had to pack their goal, and Whittaker was glad to see a shot from Martin, when the latter was put through by Kirkwood, come straight for him. Reading's equaliser was due to a bit of opportunism by Newton. Fielding got the ball on the touch line well out, and banged it to the goalmouth; McGinnigle and Harford dashed for it, and the goalkeeper would have got to the ball but for the centre-half being there; NEWTON and McGinnigle went heads up, and the former got it, and into the net the ball went.

HAYHURST'S PART

The Town had the better of the exchanges to the interval though Harford's job was no sinecure. In skilfully-combined attacks, all the Town forwards had part, and Hayhurst twice kicked off the goal-line, while Kirkwood got in a magnificent first-time shot, from which Whittaker brought down the house with an equally glorious save. Hayhurst came to the rescue of his backs, and over and over again it seemed as if the goal must fall, but somehow it escaped. After one bewildering movement, Ridley stopped a shot from Martin, and the ball went to Pearson, who had closed in, and all he had to do was to touch the ball through, but the referee gave him offside. Whittaker made good saves from Rennie, who was at his best, Pearson and Martin. Reading rallied again, and Harford was almost sure of work when they got away. Butler missed a good chance, and the goalkeeper saved from Oxberry and Newton, while Mackey bundled over the centre-forward when he had got through and was on 'he poin' of firing. Before the whistle went for half-time the Town were at the other end again and Whittaker twice saved cleverly.

READING 1
LUTON 1

In the first minute of the second half the Town should have taken the lead. After clever manoeuvring by Kean and his wing, Pease shot in, and Whittaker got to the ball but was dispossessed by Pearson. There was a fierce struggle to get a the ball and Pease rushed up and shot as it came from the ruck, but his aim was wrong. For several minutes the Town continued to hold the upper hand, and Reading had to defend desperately. Hayhurst was a third back, and it was well that he was right in the rear at this stage, his height and weight being invaluable to backs who were panicky. Reading's raids did not trouble Harford, though once

Newton got in a shot that grazed the bar. Reading's backs came up to the half-way line and tried offside tactics with some success, but their forwards did not do much damage. When they got the lead it was sheer bad luck for Mackey and Harford. After a move on the left NEWTON took the ball and shot towards goal; Mackey jumped and headed a ball that came unexpectedly and awkwardly, and it was deflected just out of the goalkeeper's reach.

THROVE ON LUCK

For a time Reading lived on this side of good fortune, and attacked hotly, but the Town defended finely. The home team meant keeping the lead at any cost, and their flank halves were frequently penalised. Harford made splendid saves before the Town got on the move. Kirkwood put behind following a brilliant movement, and Pease and Pearson got across square centres that were taken by Whittaker. Still the game had lost much of its sparkle, and there were many offences: the Town were responding to the challenges of the home team in the matter of vigour. Rowe was spoken to and just afterwards Wright was laid out when making a violent tackle on Pease. Eight minutes from the end the hope that the Town would snatch a point was shattered. Reading got away and forced a corner. The ball was headed clear, and the Town players moved out of the goal area; the ball was sent back, and NEWTON received it, standing all alone, with no one to beat but Harford, he hesitated before putting the ball into the net, and to the amazement of everybody the goal was allowed. Play was more vigorous before the end, and free kicks were frequent, and from one against the Town the ball was placed in the goal-mouth, and McGOUGH'S head turned it away from Harford to complete the scoring.

READING'S RALLY

Reading deserved their success only because of their late rally after the tonic of two lucky goals. They finished very strongly, and undoubtedly the misfortunes that befell the Town defenders had an unsettling effect. Whittaker kept goal splendidly; his backs were fighters rather than polished defenders, and both should have been censured quite early on. The flank halves also adopted anything but fair measures in the second half, but Hayhurst played a clean and scrupulous game all through, and was a big factor in the defence. Newton was an opportunist, and his colleagues gained confidence as the game progressed, and near the end played bright football.

TOWN TEAM

Harford could not be blamed for any goal against him. He had not the ghost of a chance against any scoring shot. His backs did well, too, and although four goals were scored against the defence, each was a snap goal, not one coming from a shot direct. Kingham and Mackey kicked and tackled well, and the halves showed good understanding with the forwards, and were a level lot. Apart from the lack of thrust at centre, the forwards were a much better balanced and more skilful combination. Rennie played more like his self, and Pearson did not fall into the old habit of dallying. Kirkwood was about the best forward on the field, and a great schemer, while Martin showed as much cleverness as usual, though, of course, he had not the weight to combat vigorous defenders.

There were 8,000 spectators.