

A FROST AT EXETER

LUTON FAIL AFTER PROMISING START

Rennie on the Mark

(By "CRUSADER")

EXETER CITY 4

LUTON TOWN 2

EXETER.—Davies; Gray, Hughes; Clarke, Webb, Hardie; Whitlow, Wrightson, Poulter, Houghton, Hurst.

LUTON. — Harford; Kingham, Mackey; Brown, McGinnigle, Fraser; Lawson, Tait, Rennie (A.), Hutchison, Anderson.

Referee.—Mr. J. M. Wiltshire, Sherborne.

FROM the manner of their start it appeared that LUTON TOWN were certain winners of their game at St. James's Park, EXETER. Their ending, too, suggested that another quarter of an hour would have meant the second turn of the tide in their favour, for the beginning and the ending of their game were the best parts. In the middle they sagged badly, and though they had all the misfortune that was going, it was the lapse in the first half after they had taken the lead that eventually decided the result. It is no reflection upon Brown to say that Fred Kean was badly missed, for the deputy played a very good game, even after having a bad few minutes at the hands of the referee—quite unjustly in one sense. What was missing was the bit of fighting spirit that Kean can always infuse when it is needed, and there was a big need for it in this game. Not that the City were rough; indeed, the game was as pleasant as any between the clubs during the last ten years, but they went into the fray with any amount of vigour and determination, and their kick and rush methods on the hard ground unsettled the Town defence.

DIFFICULT GROUND

The ground was very hard, and heel marks and skid marks had been frozen, and so control on the ground was difficult; Exeter did not attempt much ground passing, with the exception of Houghton, who had a roving commission, but they booted the ball hard, and it was in the air a lot. The Town tried to keep it down, and continued to do so even after the tactics of the City had proved the more effective. The big lesson of the match from the Town's point of view was that the rearranged attack was no better than any other that has been tried, and there must needs be further changes if there is to be an improvement.

EARLY SUCCESS

From the kick-off there was a natty bit of work in which Fraser and Hutchison took the eye, and the latter nipped through and suddenly drove hard at goal, but the ball struck Gray and went behind for a corner. Play settled in the vicinity of the home goal, and there was much promise in the quickness and elusiveness of the Town attack at this point. Davies had a good deal of anxiety with the ball continually floating about the goal area, but there was no decisive shot, and the home backs and halves covered their charge very well. Raids were made by the home forwards, but these gave Harford no trouble, and when the Town took the lead after thirteen minutes the goal was well merited. Tait had received, and when a pass to Lawson was expected the inside-right raced up the middle and then banged hard at goal from twenty yards' range. The ball struck a defender and went towards the left, and RENNIE fastened upon it and whipped it into the net at lightning speed, Davies having not a ghost of a chance.

A VAIN APPEAL

This was good going, but Exeter woke up a bit and Harford came into action. Houghton once dribbled right through, but sent tamely behind. Play was in midfield when Brown was penalised for a foul on Houghton near the touch-line; the ball was lifted into the goal-area, but sent back, and it appeared that the danger was gone, but as it came back up the middle two or three players attempted to kick it, and missed completely, and POULTER seized and shot first time hard and low into the net. The Town players appealed strongly for off-side, as the home centre-forward was right behind the backs, but the referee ignored the appeal. Just afterwards Brown was in a mix-up, almost sandwiched between a couple of opponents, and when he collided with an opponent the referee whistled and then spoke to the Town half-back before a free kick was given against him. The incident took place right in front of the Press seats, and I am sure there was no attempt by Brown to foul anyone, but Mr. Wiltshire gave one of his dramatic sketches, without which his efficiency would not be diminished.

COUPLE FOR CITY

The Town played up very well, and Davies had more to do than Harford, though it was not so trying. Lawson and Anderson got over many centres, and shots were frequently tried by the inside forwards but the home defence was well packed, and though hard pressed, got the ball away. Then came a spell in which the City could do no wrong and the Town could do nothing right. The City right got busy, and from the touch-line Whitlow lunged the ball into the goalmouth where POULTER, unmarked, headed a fine goal. A quick response by the Town threatened

to draw level, Gray kicking off the line when Davies was beaten after a rush by Tait and McGinnigle. For a few minutes play remained near the City goal, and then a big kick went up the home right, and from a swinging pass, right to left, HURST raced Kingham to the ball, and the latter slipped on the frozen ground; the winger had a clear course to goal, and raced in to shoot hard, the ball passing through a very narrow space between Harford's foot and the upright. The Town struck back, playing much better football than their opponents, but getting no reward. Once Davies was helpless as Rennie dashed in, but the ball struck his knee and trickled just wide. Davies saved half-a-dozen times before the half-time note was heard.

CITY 3, TOWN 1.

For the greater part of the second half play was very scrappy, and the Town seemed unable to settle down. It was well that the Town rearguard showed plenty of grit at this period, and Harford saved magnificently. The City halves and backs constantly booted the ball first time into the Town penalty area, and Mackey and Kingham headed away time after time, while all the halves took a turn in relieving the pressure. A fine pass by Tait to Anderson gave the Town a footing at the other end, but the winger sent the ball into Davies' hands, and then in a further attack Hutchison slipped the ball into goal, but Davies took it while Gray held Rennie at bay. Lawson put some life into his work on the right, but a couple of shots came back off defenders. The City took up the running again, and Harford had his work cut out to capture a header from Poulter, and the next minute he brought the house down with a wonderful save—probably the best he has ever made for Luton. A free kick was given against Mackey for "hands" when the ball bounced awkwardly on to his arm from the frozen turf. Clarke shot hard for goal, but the ball would have gone wide had not Whitlow bobbed up and headed; the ball appeared certain to reach the farther side of the net, but a tremendous leap and punch by Harford sent the ball over the bar.

MISHAPS

For a long time after this there was not much life in the game, and the ball travelled from end to end without much brightness in the movements. Such as were attempted by the Town came unstuck against hefty tackling, while the City were usually kicking hard and trusting to speed and energy to break down the defence. Harford saved frequently, though he had plenty of time in which to take the ball, and then with Rennie compelle to leave the field owing to receiving at close quarters a smack on the nose, from which he bled freely, the City attacked hotly. Once they got the ball through, but there was no question about the off-side decision. Then Kingham came down heavily in a tackle, and had to be carried off. Rennie came back just as Kingham was being taken to the rails, and while they were short-handed the Town put more vitality into their work. McGinnigle suddenly took hold and dribbled the ball past three opponents before parting to his right wing; Tait and Lawson then had a turn, and the former passed into the middle for RENNIE to dart past Hughes and shoot first time, Davies having no chance.

ISSUE SAFE

Then Kingham came back with his knee bandaged, and went to outside-right. Brown kicked strongly at back, and Lawson plugged away at half, and for a few minutes it seemed as if the Town would get level again. Kingham once beat a couple of men standing and Hutchison received his centre and shot hard, but Webb had fallen back and got in the way. It was only a spasm, and then the City rushed away, and had a free kick for "hands" just outside the penalty area. The ball was cleared, but was swung out to the left, and HURST dashed in and shot hard, the ball swerving right away from Harford, who was positioned in the line of flight. Then came a return by the Town, and after good dribbling by Hutchison, Rennie slipped out to the left and with the home defence crowding after him he swung the ball right across goal; Kingham had closed in and a goal seemed certain, but just as the ball reached him he went down, and the chance was gone. The Town came again, and a fine shot by Rennie just cleared the bar, and when he took a free kick from the edge of the penalty area, the ball struck Webb and went behind for a fruitless corner. That was the last sign of danger for either goal.

PLAYERS

Harford was twice beaten unexpectedly by Hurst, while the City's first goal, the Town players averred, was scored from an off-side position. Mackey was the best defender on the field, and he played magnificently throughout. Kingham never seemed confident after the first goal, though he did much good work without touching his best. The halves were a level lot, with little to choose, but all found the hard ground very troublesome, and there was not the understanding there usually is with the attack. Brown did very well, and McGinnigle and Fraser were better in the second half than in the first. The forward line was not very successful. Rennie played well, and deserved at least another goal. Hutchison had a splendid first half, but in the second did not get rid of the ball to the best advantage, while Anderson had a moderate day. Lawson could hardly be expected to succeed at outside-right, since it is so many years since he played there, but he got over a few nice centres and Tait worked hard, and certainly had more shots than usual. The line as a whole, however, found the strong tackling and kicking of the home defenders too much.

Gray, Hardie and Houghton were the best of the City.

There were fewer than 5,000 spectators.