

BEATEN AT HOME

LUTON TOWN FALL TO CHARLTON

Feeble Finishers

(By CRUSADER)

LUTON TOWN 1
CHARLTON ATHLETIC 2
LUTON. — Preedy: Kingham, Mackey;
Kean, McGinnigle, Fraser; Bell (S), Martin,
Cook, Stephenson, Russell.
CHARLTON. — Wright: Smith, Oakes;
Harris, Turner, Jobling; Wilkinson,
Robinson, Prior, Stephenson, Hobbs.
Referee.—Mr. D. G. Kirby, Coventry.

LUTON TOWN have again failed to get off the mark for the season as well as we hoped they would, or as well as they should have done. It is a very great pity, for once more there was a magnificent attendance, 11,266 spectators paying for admission to the match with CHARLTON ATHLETIC, and crowds of this size merit better results than the Town gave on Saturday. That has to be said, though it is as well recognised by the officials and players as by those of us outside. It is difficult to find any feasible explanation for the defeat in view of the tremendous advantage the Town had on the balance of the play. All sorts of suggestions have reached me, and, no doubt, effect will be given to some of them for the next game.

UNDER A CLOUD

Charlton were under a cloud owing to the fatality that deprived them of their best goalkeeper, but, while this may have had some bearing on their play, it was evident from the start that the team were full of fighting spirit, and were determined to give of their best. In the first half, there was not by any means an overwhelming advantage to the Town, though they had the better of the exchanges, but, in the second period, the game virtually resolved into a struggle between the Town attack and the Charlton rearguard, which was amply reinforced from the middle and front line. Making due allowance for the failure in goal, the whole of the blame cannot be placed upon Preedy; the forwards had so much of the play that they should have gone very near double figures had they been as capable marksmen as they were artists in approach.

DID COOK SCORE?

Cook had very hard luck early on, when he beat the goalkeeper, but the ball struck the bar, and for some minutes the Town swarmed round the goal, and there seemed to be no doubt whatever that Cook actually did score when he headed past the goalkeeper after the latter had repelled hurriedly a hard shot by Martin, but a defender kicked away, and the referee refused to grant a goal. Wright was continually in action, and saved splendidly, while his backs and Turner put up a grim resistance. It was nearly all the Town, though now and then the visitors made an essay that troubled the Town backs, and Mackey, especially, at this stage proved of immense value. The other defenders were inclined to crowd too closely together, and to get in each other's way.

RUSSELL'S PENALTY

It was a bit unfortunate for the visitors that the referee adjudged that Harris had handled in the penalty area. I did not think he had any intention of doing so, for the ball appeared to strike his arm when Fraser centred, but a penalty kick was ordered, and RUSSELL scored with the right sort of shot from the spot, the goalkeeper having not the slightest chance. After a brief rally by the visitors, the Town again took up the pressure, and Wright's charge escaped in extraordinary fashion. There was still a feeling of insecurity among the Town defenders, but the equalising goal for the visitors was a soft thing. A corner was obtained on the right wing, and Wilkinson's attempt was a poor one, but Robinson made a great effort, and managed to hook the ball into the goal-mouth; Preedy seemed to have it well covered, but it eluded him and went into the net.

CHARLTON'S LUCK

It seemed to be a very bad blunder on the part of Preedy, but some of those near the goal say that the ball struck a bump in the ground and was deflected right away from him. For Charlton, in any case, it was a great slice of luck, and they attacked with plenty of spirit. The Town defenders were beaten by the swinging passes of the visitors, and once there was real danger until Kean dashed into the ruck and by spirited and skilful play cleared the lines. Before the interval, however, the Town were at it again, and shots were sent in again and again, but there was no loophole in a very sound defence, and the teams changed over with the scores level.

LUTON 1
CHARLTON 1

The visitors had to concentrate on defence almost throughout the second half, and there was a lot of erratic play through over-eagerness and excitement. Try as they would, the Town could not penetrate the almost solid lines into which the Charlton players formed in front of their goal. The approach work of the Town, for which the skilful work of Kean and Fraser was largely responsible, brought them into the goal area with almost monotonous regularity, but such shots as were sent in were either well taken by Wright, or struck the defenders, who were given a gruelling time. Gamely they stuck to the job, and when they could find their units who remained in the attack, the Town defenders were often caught at a disadvantage, and there was anxiety for the home goal.

PREEDY FAILS

Turner was loudly applauded for magnificent work under the bar when a goal seemed certain, and while his backs were kicking anywhere and without much judgment, he kept his head and repelled attack after attack. Russell was unlucky with an overhead shot which struck the bar and dropped on to the goalkeeper, who got it away after desperate work. Scrummages in the Charlton goalmouth were frequent and prolonged, but there was not the energy necessary to beat through. Some of the shooting was poor, but there were shots that brought out the qualities of the Charlton goalkeeper, and he did remarkably well. A goal was confidently expected from this continuous pressure, but it did not come at that end. In a rush by the visitors' right wing, Wilkinson drove the ball across to the left, Hobbs shot, and Preedy, although he had the ball well covered, failed to gather it, and it bounced from his arms straight to the feet of PRIOR, who was uncovered, and easily scored. The Town pressed fiercely right to the end, but they could not make any impression on the very gallant defence of the visitors.

DEFENSIVE ERRORS

Preedy had very little work, and whatever excuse might be reasonably made for an first goal against him, the second should not have been scored. He was not comfortable. Mackey was the better of the backs, playing a great game, but Kingham, after a good start, did not maintain his best. The trouble in the rear was that frequently there were two or three players going for the ball together, there was no claim for possession as there should have

been, and it would have surprised none if there had been an injury through this. McGinnigle was uncertain, although he gave Prior no scope, and though he worked with his customary zeal, he should have a better understanding with his backs. This lack was obvious. Kean played as well as ever, and with Fraser was a dominating personality in the middle of the field.

FORWARDS

Not a single forward played up to his very best form. Martin was a schemer, but there was inability to carry on the work he did; Bell was less effective than usual, though he and Russell were probably the best of the attack. Stephenson did a great many clever things, but he could not make a telling shot, and his habit of holding on too long enabled the Charlton defenders to cover up. After a really good start, Cook fell away, and could not find a way past Turner. The combination was certainly better than that of the visitors, because they were more intent upon defence, but the finishing was feeble.

CHARLTON

Wright kept goal finely for the visitors, and on this form will keep his place. Smith and Oakes were hard fighters, resolute in tackling, and both were hard, though often erratic, kickers. The star of the side was Turner, who played grandly all through the piece, and never faltered. The other halves were overshadowed by his brilliance. Stephenson did many clever things, and Hobbs was a fine outside left, but the opportunities for the forwards were few, which was, perhaps, fortunate for Luton.