

DESERVED SUCCESS

LUTON WIN THROUGH GRUELLING STRUGGLE

Team Spirit the Factor

(By CRUSADER)

LUTON TOWN 2
SWINDON TOWN 0

(Stephenson, Sam Bell).

LUTON. — Coen; Kingham, Mackey; Brown, Thayne, Fraser; Bell (S.), Martin, Bell (T.), Rennie, Stephenson.

SWINDON. — Houldsworth; Duckworth, Herod; Horrocks, Nixon, Merrick; Peters, Fowler, Jack, Bowl, Gunson.

Referee.—Mr. E. C. Carnwell, Lichfield.

ONLY after a hard, gruelling struggle did Luton gain their second League victory. They won on their merits, too, but it was abundantly clear that Swindon Town's position in the League table is deserved. From first to last they displayed grit and fighting qualities fore and aft, and at no time could it be claimed that they were subdued. Happily there was far more collective energy and determination on the Luton side than has been apparent in the majority of their games this season, and that it was pulled them through. Had there been any tendency to slacken off even in the closing stages, Swindon might well have shared, or even have taken the whole of, the spoils. The success did much to ameliorate the disappointments of the supporters, and to raise hopes of still better performances.

STEPHENSON MISSES

Opening exchanges were fast and even, the Swindon attack showing plenty of punch, and being rather the more aggressive. Their defence was also alert to every move by the Town forwards, and the first dangerous assault at either end came from the visitors. Only a magnificent save by Coen prevented Jack opening an account, the goalkeeper having to throw himself across goal to turn the ball behind. This spurred the home side, and Stephenson was prominent with strong and forceful efforts. One centre might have been fruitful if Tom Bell could have gathered the ball, which was travelling fast, and just afterwards Stephenson raced in after bright work by his colleagues, and a goal seemed certain, but he shot right across, and the ball travelled past the farther upright.

BRIGHT EXCHANGES

The home team were playing up spiritedly, and after several sharp attacks had been nullified by the stern qualities of the Swindon defence, Rennie shot well, and Houldsworth was unable to get near the ball ere it struck the bar and rebounded. Following this escape the visitors introduced much more vigour into the game, and there were a few free kicks, but none was effectively used. Tom Bell once managed to squeeze a way past the policeman—Nixon—but he could not direct the ball aright. Coen showed splendid judgment when he nisted out a corner kick, and then accepted shots from fairly long range. A move by the home right brought a hot struggle close to the Swindon goal. Martin met Sam Bell's centre, and Houldsworth and his backs and the Town right-wing pair were in a mix-up before the ball was got away. After a sortie at the other end, in which Kingham and Mackey did cool and steady work under pressure, the Town went through again, and Horrocks, by a quick tackle, robbed Rennie as the latter was about to shoot. Swindon's forwards were quick to challenge the slightest dilatoriness of the Town in clearing, and once Peters took advantage of this and got clear away, but Coen effected a brilliant save at the expense of a corner that was abortive.

STEPHENSON SCORES

Back came the Town, the right wing carrying the ball right through, and Martin, by dainty footwork, took the ball into the goal area, but as he was tackled, pushed the ball forward, and Stephenson raced in hard and shot at point blank range, but failed to get an accurate aim, and the chance was gone. Play continued to be vigorously contested, with the Town doing rather the more pressing, and there were several free kicks against the visitors' defenders. From one of these Stephenson headed only a foot

wide, but nearing the interval, there was a rush through the middle: Nixon failed to hold Rennie and Tom Bell, and they scraped the ball past him, and the latter turned it over to the left for STEPHENSON to rush in and beat Houldsworth with a hard shot. This was the last incident of note before change of ends.

LUTON TOWN 1
SWINDON TOWN 0

Swindon resumed strongly, and the Town rearguard had some anxiety before the ball was sent out of danger. The Town then asserted some superiority, and menaced the Swindon goal repeatedly, but there were few shots on the mark. Houldsworth once punched out from Martin, and Rennie volleyed the return over the bar. Herod appeared to use his hands to hold the ball when Sam Bell beat him in a tussle, and there was a loud cry from the crowd and the players for a penalty kick, but the referee, who was on the blind side, waved for play to proceed. Martin only just failed to turn the ball through after a neat nod from Tom Bell had put the ball in the goalmouth, and Houldsworth was kept as busy as an acrobatic dancer.

HEAVY PRESSURE

Swindon caused some trouble on the left wing when Brown, otherwise playing very well indeed, failed to complete his clearances, and once Mackey had to tear across, and, by strenuous work, free the Town goal from serious trouble. Kingham also did much skilful work, and eventually the excitement was at the other end. Herod was lucky to see a hard shot from Stephenson ricochet from his foot and glance behind, and then Houldsworth punched away as Martin charged him into the net. Swindon's occasional raids continued to worry the Town defenders, but the balance of play was with the home side. Stephenson was brought down by Duckworth, but made a very poor attempt from the free-kick and, in similar circumstances, was no better soon afterwards.

CLINCHED THE ISSUE

Swindon did better with Jack at inside-right, and Fowler at centre-forward, and Thayne did well to clear one ugly situation, while Kingham and Mackey were alive to the danger that came mainly from the inside forwards. Peters did not have a good time against Fraser, but Jack often found a lot of space in which to work, and should have been shouldered off two or three times when he tried spectacular dribbles. Swindon's strong bid for an equaliser failed, though Gunson had one good chance when Jack centred right across goal, but the ball glanced off his foot and went wide. Five minutes from the end the issue was made almost safe. Martin pushed the ball straight through the middle, and for once Nixon was not dogging Tom Bell; the latter had a clear course, and seemed certain to score, but waited too long, and Houldsworth, who had dashed out of goal, flung himself at the oncoming forward's feet and knocked the ball away; both players were prone, but SAM BELL had wisely raced inside, and got there before any defender could frustrate him and shot into the empty goal. This was the last incident of note.

DEFENCE

Coen did his little very well; three very difficult shots he had to save, but there was confidence and good judgment in all his work. Kingham made a very successful return to the side, and he and Mackey gave a sound display, their kicking and tackling being resolute and clean. Thayne again did very well as pivot, especially after he had sized up Jack's dribbling propensity in the first half. Brown also justified his inclusion, doing many bright things, but one thing he must avoid, and that is the tendency to dribble in the vicinity of his own goal. He has the admirable quality of wanting to do something good with the ball, but the best thing in moments of stress is to hit it clear of danger. His constructive work was good, and almost equal to that of Fraser, who made a lot of difference to the middle line, both in defence and attack.

ATTACK

The forwards were capable of good mid-field work, as usual; at times a bit slow, but they were able to give the Swindon rearguard a great deal more trouble than was seen at Luton's end. Shooting, however, was poor. All were triers, and there was not much to choose among them, but a good word should be said for Stephenson, appearing on the extreme wing for the first time for the Town; he was a potent factor in attack, especially at close quarters.

For Swindon, Houldsworth kept goal well; Herod was a fine back, and Nixon a powerful pivot of the third-back type. Horrocks made a promising debut. In the forward line there was no outstanding player, though Fowler was pretty good, and Jack was in the picture now and then as a flashy dribbler.

There were 7,800 spectators, and the receipts amounted to £441 7s. Considering the weather conditions, this was quite good.