

HARD GAME AND ONE GOAL

LUTON'S GREAT FIGHT AT ELM PARK

Superb Defence

(By "CRUSADER")

READING 1
(Butler)
LUTON TOWN 0
READING.—Whittaker, Gregory, Robson, Johnson, Hayhurst, Wright, Butler, Chandler, Tait, Barley, Fielding.
LUTON TOWN.—Coen; Reece, Mackey; Brown, Thayne, Fraser; Crompton, Martin, Ball, Rennie, Stephenson.
Referee.—G. Dutton, Southport.

LUTON TOWN'S fine run of success ended at Elm Park, but they have no need to be discouraged. They put up a great fight, and went down with colours flying.

The game from start to finish was contested at a tremendous pace, neither side showing any falling-off, and in the very late stages the Town came nearer to scoring than in any period of the game. Reading won because they were better balanced in defence, the Town were probably superior for the home defence was never tested to the same extent as that of the Town, and the chief honours were rightly accorded to Coen and colleagues.

There can be little doubt that the defence as at present constituted is the best at the command of the club, but there is need for a sharpening up of the attack, which all too often faded out against the strong, bustling tactics of the Reading defenders.

FIRM REFEREE

It was good to see the referee affirm his authority very quickly, for, as a result, players went more for the ball, though they did not hesitate to tackle hard and to use their shoulders well as occasion arose. The official did make mistakes, but was determined in the assertion of his office. Coen was early brought into action, but the Town were quick to respond. They were driven back, and the game settled down to a quick exchange of attacks, in which, however, the home team were the

more consistent and the more determined. Crompton made one or two efforts when he got the ball, but the better work came from the left wing, and Stephenson twice had chances to nip in and shoot, but he did so very hastily, and gave Whittaker no trouble. At the other end, Fielding several times got the ball across, but he had to do it quickly, for Reece kept him in check, and forced him to part much more quickly than he would otherwise have done.

HAYHURST

Hayhurst was a tower of strength in the home defence, and Ball could not shake him off, though the Town persisted in trying to force a way through the middle. On the other hand, the home team utilised their extreme wingers to advantage, and both Butler and Fielding made clever efforts. Coen, and his backs, with Thayne giving much attention to Tait, were beset, and the goalkeeper brought off brilliant saves. After a period of severe pressure on the Town goal, the Reading defence had some anxiety, but Rennie, after dribbling cleverly into position fired well wide, and just afterwards Stephenson cut in and shot hard, the ball travelling right across the goal-mouth; Crompton caught it, and lifted it back into the goal area, where Robson was glad to boot it behind. Corner-kicks were of little use to the Town, however, especially on the left, where Stephenson could not place the ball effectively.

THAYNE BARS TAIT

Crompton, also, should have done better when he was given chances to beat, and Martin eluded a couple of opponents, and sent to Stephenson, who returned the ball, only to see Hayhurst get it away almost off the line.

Reading replied with furious attacks, and Tait made the most strenuous efforts to break through, but found his

way barred by one or other defender when he managed to get past Thayne, which was not often.

Martin and Rennie again opened out the play, and there was a bright attack in which Ball received, and by a neat back-heel, enabled Stephenson to cut in, but he did not shoot before three defenders got the closure on him. In a return, the Town right wing and Brown did well, and when the left wing carried on, and Stephenson shot the ball across, Crompton headed, but Whittaker saved. Coen had the more difficult work, and saved his charge magnificently. Half-time.—

READING 1
LUTON TOWN 0

Reading immediately took charge on the resumption, and Coen dived at full length and held a sharp drive by Butler. Quickly the ball went to the other end, but try and try would Ball could not get around the Hayhurst. There had been several sharp tussles between Stephenson and Gregory, and, following one clash, the referee spoke out to stop Martin, who was carrying a very high overhead kick by Ball swooped down under the bar, but Whittaker was all there. Rennie gave his partner a fine pass just afterwards, and the winger sent the ball over well, but Robson forestalled Crompton as the winger closed in. Fielding next had a turn, following the skilful work of Fraser, who was in a good attacking position, he shot yards wide. Fielding's left wing now made a lot of trouble, and Fielding made sparkling efforts. He rarely got the ball across, but deflected it, but slung the ball across first time, and Thayne and Mackey cleared grandly when Tait and Barley looked like scoring. Coen also saved well from Fielding and Chandler.

THE ONE GOAL

However, the home team, playing harder than ever, if that were possible, were down again, and Barley sent out to Fielding, who returned the ball into the middle. Tait then came in, and he was in a good position to shoot, but he was not in the ball to the right, where BUTLER was unmarked, and dashed in to beat Coen with a hard drive from six yards' range.

This sent up the home stock, and they pressed forward, and it was evident that all his colleagues wanted Tait to maintain his scoring record with the club, but always he was up against a bar.

Barley put in a glorious shot, and I am certain that Coen tipped the ball over the bar, but the referee gave a goal-kick, and was Reece that relieved the pressure with dashing work, and the Town had another turn, only for Stephenson to be cut out by Gregory. Then came the grandest bit of individual work of the match. Brown seized the ball in his own half, and beat many of his opponents, and he was on the right, but refused to be beaten, and eventually presented Martin with a great chance; the inside-right sent right across goal with the custodian right out of position had the aim been correct.

CHEERS FOR BROWN

Brown was loudly applauded for this effort, and did more fine work, setting his forwards going with good passes. Always, however, they found the home defenders too good. Crompton neatly tricked Wright and Robson, but, when he got the ball across, Whittaker was able to clear comfortably, and when Stephenson did the same, Ball was too long in getting the ball under control, and Hayhurst blocked his passage. The home left again made matters warm for the Town defence, and Coen saved well from Tait, who was forced out to the left, and could only trickle the ball across for Chandler to shoot hurriedly. Reading came again, and again, only to be thwarted on the right when Butler centred. Barley, who was working hard, both as a half-back and a forward, was a factor in further assaults, and Fraser did well to beat Butler as he ran in.

REECE'S EFFORT

When the Town forwards got through again Ball sent out to the right, and Crompton darted in to shoot, but was well out of his reckoning. Tait was in, and Gregory just afterwards, but the free-kick was got away all right, and then Coen was in action again. He saved in grand style at full length, and further desperate attacks were beaten off. Coen was fouled again by Tait, but cleared well.

Then Reece came up the field, and tricked three or four opponents, and looked like going right through, when he was brought down by Barley, who had fallen back.

The free-kick was well placed by Reece, but Stephenson could only turn it behind when Ball had beaten the home defence. Another desperate assault followed, and from a centre by Stephenson, Whittaker saved at full length, and there was a heap of players in the goalmouth, when Crompton shot afterwards, and Whittaker again went down and gathered the ball on the line; he clung to the ball, however, and cleared as Martin bowled him over. Whittaker collared a high centre from Rennie, and Ball forced a corner, but this was fruitless, and Tait made a last attempt to get through; he was again forced out of his course by Thayne, and had to shoot from an awkward angle. Coen saving easily, and the game ended with the home team victorious.

TOWN DEFENCE

Reading were superior forward, but, in other departments, the Town were probably better, because their halves kept the ball down, and had the forwards been able to show the same vigour and marksmanship as the home attack, the result might have been at least one point.

Coen kept goal grandly, and had thrice as much work as Whittaker, who was not severely troubled until late in the game. Reece played his best game to date, and was the best back on the field. He had a very difficult wing to meet, but rarely put a foot wrong, and kicked and tackled superbly. Mackey was splendid, too, though the pace of Butler was a worry to him at times. Nevertheless, both backs did their part well. So did the halves, Thayne again holding Tait, though the latter played as well as ever he did for Luton. The Town centre-half could well be satisfied with the fact that he prevented the Reading leader from finding the net. Brown was magnificent, and Fraser close with him.

"W" FORMATION

It was in attack that the Town failed. The "W" formation was too pronounced. Whereas Reading invariably had four forwards well up, the Town rarely had more than three, and Ball was all too often on his own against two or three powerful defenders. Little wonder that he could not do much, for Hayhurst, playing a scrupulously fair game, scarcely allowed him a yard of room. Martin and Rennie were often clever, but were too far behind the rest of the attack. Crompton did not get many chances, but now and then showed promise, and will do better when he has become accustomed to his colleagues. Stephenson was good in the first half, but fell off in the second and the line, as a whole, lacked the lightning spirit of the winners.

Whittaker did well when the Town were at their best, and Robson was a sound back. At half, Hayhurst was in great form, and his colleagues were hard workers. The forwards played fast and vigorous football all along the line, and were very speedy. They kept the ball moving, and, as a result, the Town defenders were given the opportunity to prove their worth.

THE REFEREE

I have mentioned the referee. He controlled the game exceedingly well, and the

only adverse criticism of him would be that several times he pulled up Brown for fouls when the Town half-back never touched the opponent. Brown's long legs reached for and got the ball unexpectedly, and, as he was playing the ball and not the man, there could be no foul. One opponent, in particular, had the knack of falling over Brown's leg when he had lost the ball, and almost invariably the whistle went. On another occasion there was a tremendous shout for "hands" against Brown, who had his back to the referee when a hard-driven ball struck him in the stomach, and the referee gave a free kick for something that neither he nor the linesman could see, because it never happened.