

BRILLIANT RECOVERY

LUTON'S TEN MEN OVERCOME BIG HANDICAP

Crompton's Great Goal

(By CRUSADER)

SOUTHEND UTD. 3
Stevens 3 (2 penalties)
LUTON TOWN 3
Bell, Ball, Crompton.

SOUTHEND.—Moore; Smith, Robinson; Carr, Wilson (J.), Morritt; Barrow, Cheesmur, Stevens, Deacon, Oswald.
LUTON.—Coen; Smith, Mackey; Brown, McGinnigle, Payne; Crompton, Bell, Ball, Roberts, Stephenson.
Referee.—Mr. W. J. Lewington, Croydon.

SOUTHEND UNITED'S new ground was in such a terrible condition that it would have occasioned no surprise had the match been postponed. As things turned out, perhaps it would have been to Luton's advantage had this course been taken. In ordinary conditions I do not think there would be any question as to the better side, even at Southend, and the United were probably glad to rake in another point. The wretched weather had made the ground, which was formerly a brickfield, in a frightful mess, and although there happened to be enough sand at Southend to provide a more comfortable pathway up the middle of the bog for the referee, this was not much to the benefit of the players, for the ball, having gathered mud, stopped dead when it struck the sand.

FAULTY TACTICS

In the areas where sand had not been laid, mud was ankle deep, and when the workmen were wheeling their loaded barrows across, the axles of the wheels were covered. Along one of the touch lines were pools, and in parts of the pitch itself considerable quantities of water stood. Before many minutes had elapsed, the players were bespattered from head to foot; the ball would not be propelled through the mire, and neat footwork or speedy runs were impossible except on the extreme wings.

The Town came very near to losing the match, because they failed to appreciate the necessity of lifting the ball instead of trying to push it through to each other along the ground.

They persisted in trying to make progress up the middle, instead of swinging the ball out to the wings, with the result that the home players simply concentrated on defence in the middle of the ground, and then swept the ball out to their wingers, or booted it high and far into Luton's quarters for the inside men to race the backs for it.

OVERCAME THE HANDICAP

Once they adopted these methods in the second half, there was no holding the Town, and in spite of the handicap caused by the compulsory departure of Mackey, they were unquestionably the superior side.

Had Mackey remained on the field I feel that the match would have been well won, and as it was, the result was remarkable, and a great tribute to the grit and stamina of the team.

Once they got a grip on the game they never looked back, and one could almost feel goals coming. They deserved the highest praise for the spirit in which they fought, every man, and the little groups of Luton followers were thrilled by the pluck and persistence, and the merit of the methods by which the goals accrued.

MACKEY'S DEPARTURE

And now to the dismissal of Tom Mackey from the field. Two penalties were given against McGinnigle for handling. About the first, I do not think there could be any question. McGinnigle handled, and need not have done, except that apparently he tried to avert a blow from a very heavy ball. In the second instance, as far as I could see, he made no attempt to play the ball with his hand, and it also appeared to me that he was just outside the penalty area. The referee, operating on his stretch of sand, awarded the penalty. Several of the players raced up to him and protested strongly, and Mackey was among them; no hand was laid on the official, and it was only the insistence of the protests that caused the referee to take out his notebook.

I understand that when he was writing Mackey's name, the Town captain made a remark as to how it should be written, and that was why he was ordered off. After the game there was no rancour, though the official was in the company of the Town players and others.

STEVENS'S SHOT

The game, from the start, was a farce as far as football entertainment was concerned. Time after time movements attempted by either side came undone because the ball stuck, and showers of mud shot into the air as players tried to dislodge it. The first dangerous shot came from STEVENS, and beat Coen all ends up. It was a very fine effort, taken first time, and deserved success. The Town showed more skill, but the first-time kicking of the home team was more dangerous, and although several corners were forced at the Southend goal, the Town did not look like beating the defence very often. A move on the home left brought a struggle near the Town goal, and Oswald lifted the ball across, and McGinnigle half caught it, STEVENS scoring from the penalty-kick.

IMPROVING

The Town had hard luck immediately afterwards, when Stephenson bore into goal from a pass by Ball, and shot hard, Moore

knocking the ball on to the bar, and Wilson scrambled it away. At the other end, the watchfulness of Smith foiled Deacon close in. The Town were getting well together, and Mackey came right inside the Southend half, and several times kicked the ball well into the goalmouth, but it stuck in the mud and player after player tried to dislodge it, but all in vain. One good shot by Bell was deflected from the target by a head, and Moore caught the ball. So at half-time Southend were enjoying what was apparently a winning lead.

SOUTHEND 2
LUTON 0

Southend re-started as though they meant to place the result beyond doubt, and Stevens was brilliantly stopped by Smith when well through. Then came the incident that culminated in Mackey's retirement. Oswald received well out towards the touch-line, and as McGinnigle rushed towards him the left-winger shot the ball across; he was so near to McGinnigle that it was difficult to see how the Town pivot could have wilfully handled, but a penalty kick was awarded, and, as already stated, the Town captain was ordered off. STEVENS scored from the penalty-kick.

THE TURNING POINT

This was the turning point of the game. Payne went to right-back and Stephenson to left-half, and the first move was a beautiful pass by Ball that sent Crompton away, but he was whistled offside—a wrong decision, because Crompton raced past Robinson as the latter slipped in the mud. Then Stephenson made a determined effort, forcing a way along the left wing, and beating two or three opponents after desperate tackling, and Ball snapped up his pass, beat Wilson and shot; the ball struck the bar, and BELL pounced on it, and banged it into the net.

A rush by Southend was checked through Stevens fouling Coen, and the Town returned to the assault. Crompton forced a corner, and BALL beat the defenders by a clever header; Moore threw himself at the ball and touched it, but could not prevent it crossing the line, and, although Robinson tried to kick it clear, the whistle had signalled a goal.

BALL BROUGHT DOWN

Just afterwards, Ball took another pass, and burst between the backs, but they raced after him, and brought him down, and the appeal for a penalty kick was refused, though they had him down from behind. The Town played with great spirit and courage, and Ball was downed again from behind well inside the penalty area, and McGinnigle evidently felt this could be done in the Luton half, for he flagrantly tripped Barrow, and the latter slithered for yards in the mud. The Town had to fight hard to keep the homesters out, but they did it, Payne and Smith giving the ball plenty of boot, and, when the Town went through again, there was a likelihood of a goal, but Bell could not shift the ball through the mud quickly enough before being surrounded by opponents, and only a fruitless corner resulted.

LEVEL AT LAST

The equalising goal came eight minutes from the end, however, and was a gem. Roberts made a forceful dribble before shooting the ball out to the right; CROMPTON took it in his stride, and, as Robinson dashed at him, the outside-right shot with tremendous power from a difficult angle, and the ball struck the underside of the bar, and went in—a really brilliant goal.

The outside-right was bowled over and over, but his colleagues swarmed round him and congratulated him on one of the finest goals scored for the club this season.

Right to the end the home team had to defend desperately, and, when Moore was penalised for carrying, there seemed possibilities of another goal, but, owing to the mud a shot could not be made before the swarm of defenders had blocked the way. Nevertheless, it was a splendidly-won point.

THE PLAYERS

Coen again kept goal finely, though he had much less to do than in most games. Smith did magnificent work, especially when he crossed over to take Mackey's place, his tackling being fine, and his kicking showed improvement. Mackey did well while engaged, as also did the halves, though McGinnigle was unhappy in his infringements. Payne justified his inclusion, and Brown played far better than at Brighton, and had much to do with the recovery in the second half. Stephenson also proved a rare fighter when he went to half-back. The forwards put up a grand fight, although they were much to blame for keeping the ball where there was so much mud in the first half. However, their change of tactics in the second period more than compensated, and there was never any slacking or any sign of dismay when they were so much in arrears. Every man played well, and, on this form, Crompton is going to prove another great bargain for the club.

BEDS SENIOR CUP: 1st Round

Bedford T. 3. Vauxhall Motors (Luton) 1.
SOUTH MIDLANDS LEAGUE: DIV. 1.
Luton Davis Ath. 1. Baldock Town 6.