

FIRST SINCE THE WAR

BELL'S GOAL WINS LUTON'S LEAGUE GAME AT SWINDON

Skilful Defence Takes Honours

LUTON TOWN 1

(Bell) 0

SWINDON TOWN. — Houldsworth: Wallace, Herod; Cousins, Armstrong (W.), Nixon; Peters, Armstrong (T.), Fowler, Bowl, Gunson.

LUTON TOWN.—Coen; Smith, Mackey; Brown, Thayne, Fraser; Crompton, Bell, Ball, Roberts, Stephenson.

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

LUTON TOWN'S first League victory at SWINDON since the war was thoroughly deserved. Though the wind was not so bitterly cold as on the occasion of the visit to Burnley, conditions generally were worse, for rain fell all the time, and, in the second half, increased in density.

As the Town had the advantage of the weather in the first period, the extra demand upon their vitality before the end went somewhere near levelling matters from that aspect.

From the start, the "Railwaymen" attacked, the left wing getting through as the result of a faulty pass back by Smith, but Bowl made a poor attempt at finding his colleagues or shooting. The Town were hurried for a few minutes, and Peters had a good chance, but he also failed. The tricks of the ball under the persuasion of the wind upset the intentions of players on either side, but soon the Town found their stride, and the home goal was hotly besieged. The right wing gave much trouble, and the Town were wise to keep the ball on that side of the field. Herod definitely handled the ball to stop Crompton, but the referee was not in a position to see, and naturally ignored Crompton's appeal. Stephenson did strong work, and Houldsworth saved finely.

BELL'S GOAL

It was hammer and tongs in the Swindon penalty area, and eventually BELL scored. Crompton had mislaid the ball well, and two or three attempts had been frustrated when Bell took a rebound, and from well out shot hard and true, Houldsworth having no chance.

Many times the home goal escaped subsequently. One fine drive laid out Wallace, or the ball must have travelled into the net, and Houldsworth made a brilliant save from Stephenson. When Ball gave Roberts a clever pass, but the inside-left used his hands to help the ball to his feet, and the referee whistled ere the ball was in the net.

GOOD DEFENCE

Swindon's defensive play was very fine, and Herod especially shone. Whenever the home forwards went away they were dangerous, and Coen was called upon two or three times, while there were two or three corners which gave some anxiety. At the other end, there were many nag-kicks, because more than once the wind carried the ball back from a goal-kick. Centres by Crompton caused much trouble to Houldsworth and his backs, and once Ball seemed a certain scorer, but a desperate tackle by Bill Armstrong just foiled the Town leader a few feet from goal.

SKIMMING THE BAR

Shots just skimmed the bar, and Houldsworth made many very fine saves, while the packing by the home backs and moves thwarted many attacks. Near an interval, the Town goal was assailed for a few moments, and Coen had to make a couple of saves, but mostly the Town were charging on the home goal. Half-time came with the Town holding a narrow lead.

LUTON TOWN 1

SWINDON TOWN 0

Swindon had high hopes that they would be irresistible with the powerful wind at their backs, and they had something of a surprise on the restart. Keeping the ball down extremely well, and using their wingers to good purpose, the Town pressed, and Herod had to resort to unfair tactics to hold Crompton. Roberts and Stephenson were active, and Ball was a source of much worry to Bill Armstrong and the backs. Coen came to the rescue of the Town when Swindon tried to rush the defence, and effected a grand save from Fowler.

There was another thrill at the other end when Stephenson took on from Ball, cut in nicely, and then lifted the ball across; the wind held the ball as Ball headed in, and Houldsworth saved. Swindon attacked furiously, but the Town packed nicely, and such shots as went in were from a range that gave Coen time to see the ball, and that was enough.

BROWN'S EFFORT

Naturally the ball was generally in the Town half, but every time it went down the field there was excitement for the Swindon defenders. Once Brown tore up among the crowd, and just missed with a fine header from Stephenson's centre.

Coen evoked applause by a magnificent save when two or three opponents were clean through, and only a yard or two away; the goalkeeper threw himself among them, and snatched the ball and held on, the whistle eventually bringing relief.

RATTLED

There was another shock for the crowd when Ball took a pass, and, with the backs wide apart, went through, tricking the goalkeeper and walking the ball into the net, but the whistle and goal for outside at the instance of a linesman. Herod committed two or three fouls on Crompton, and the home players were getting quite rattled, though, apart from the infringements by their captain, there were few.

Swindon tried hard to pierce the Town defence, but, with the assistance of the forwards and halves, the backs felled them, and many times they hounded the home defenders by feinting to play the racing ball, and then allowing the wind to carry it behind. A desperate rush by Tom Armstrong, who has plenty of weight, was stopped by Smith, who floored the opponent in a real, old-fashioned charge, shoulder to shoulder.

COEN COMES THROUGH

Ball again led a raid, and Crompton got clean away, rounding Herod and cutting into goal, but, from a few yards' range he shot straight at Houldsworth, with Ball and Stephenson waiting unmarked for the pass. A similar movement followed, but Crompton was whistled offside as he sped into goal. Swindon made fiercer efforts as the end approached, and Coen was knocked over by a rush of opponents, but he held on to the ball, and finally wriggled clear and got it away.

GRAND DEFENCE

Any suggestion that the Town could hold their lead at half-time seemed

ludicrous; not only did they do so, but they also came just as near scoring as did Swindon, in spite of the home team doing the more attacking.

The win was thoroughly merited, not only by the superior defensive work, but by the skilful way in which the Town neutralised the effects of the wind. Every man played courageously and cleverly. Coen made three or four grand saves, and was as safe as ever.

The back play has never been better this season, discounting the first few minutes when the players did not seem to settle down.

Not only did the Town backs kick and tackle effectively; the secret of their success was in the judicious positioning. The ball was made for them, apparently, and again and again the Swindon forwards were beaten to the acceptance of a pass. The halves also played well to a man, with little to choose among them, though Fraser was again at his best, and Thayne did grand service in the second half.

Brown was cheeky enough to become a forward at times even against the wind and nearly scored.

The forwards kept the ball down better than did the Swindon attackers, and the whole line played somewhere near the best, without any individual being outstanding.

SWINDON

For Swindon Houldsworth kept the ball finely, and both backs did well, though Herod gave away more free kicks than any other player. Armstrong played stoutly at half, and Fowler was a hard-working centre-forward, with Tom Armstrong an energetic colleague.