

SOUTHEND ROCK

DEFENCE THAT LUTON COULD NOT BREAK

Town's Third Defeat

(By "CRUSADER")

SOUTHEND UNITED 2
(Stevens 2)

LUTON TOWN 1
(Ball, penalty)

LUTON TN.—Coen; Finlayson, Hubbard; Payne, Fellowes, Kidd; Crompton, Andrews, Ball, Roberts, Stephenson.

SOUTHEND UNITED.—Moore; Nelson, Robinson; Spelman, Turner, Carr; Demellweek, Firth, Stevens, Lane, Oswald.
Referee.—G. Hamilton-Jones, Woolwich.

EXCUSES might well be made for Luton Town's first two defeats, because both games were away, and it is an axiom that there should be more errors when playing away than at home. For the third successive loss, however, which occurred on their own ground, Luton Town team cannot expect excuses. They made so much of the game that they should have assured victory long before half-time. A reason ciners from an excuse, and the plain fact about this third blow to the supporters was simply that there was almost an entire absence of team work. Every player worked hard and put in his best, undoubtedly, but the attempts at combination failed utterly because every player seemed devoid of any knowledge of what any one of his colleagues would, or could, do.

THE VALUE OF CO-OPERATION

Southend were by no means a brilliant lot; they were quicker on the ball than Luton at times, but their underspanning of each other's position and their confidence in each other overcame the individual ability of the Town. Had there been as much team spirit and team work among the Town players there would never have been any question of defeat. Individual skill was shown to a far greater degree by the losers, but it proved hopeless against the methodical challenging and determined co-operation of the United. The Town may win matches by the individual enthusiasm of the players, but they will not get very far on it, and certainly nowhere near the main objective. The remedy has to be found in the training time, and if such crowds as we saw on Saturday are to be kept, then there will have to be intensive efforts to get the team spirit into operation without delay.

THE FIRST SHOCK

Luton began so well that we thought the previous failures were going to be wiped out, but the pressure on the Southend goal was enfeebled by the lack of determination against the stubborn defence. As efforts were nullified as much by the hesitation of the home forwards as by the insistence of the Southend defenders, the visitors began to show their mettle, and there were qualms when the home halves and backs were outpaced. The quality of the Town middle line was unequal; it was good in attack, but wobbly in defence, and when the Southend forwards made tracks and positioned so well to receive passes the threat was obvious. It was fulfilled when STEVENS took advantage of a slip by Fellowes, and without hesitation fired home a beautiful drive. Many thought that Coen misjudged the flight of the ball, but I do not think he had a chance.

CHANCES MISSED

Constant fiddling about with the ball and the attempts to run right into the Southend goal with it when a shot might well have been taken from fifteen or twenty yards irritated the crowd, though the Southend defenders deserved credit for the manner in which they covered up. There were no gaps in their defensive lines such as were to be found at the other end. Had there been a little snappiness in the Town attack they could have equalised. Ball, receiving a decent pass from Payne, managed to force his way close into goal, but Moore covered the narrow channel to goal and blocked the shot, and Turner helped the goalkeeper out the next time. Southend made only occasional raids, but they contrived to keep the Town out of the danger space for considerable stretches.

A PENALTY GOAL

Half-an-hour had elapsed when Ball was trying to bore a hole in the opposing defence and Turner used his hands on the Town captain's back. A penalty kick seemed a rather severe decision, and the visitors argued about it, but the referee

was firm, and BALL scored from the penalty spot. Coen had to save after a long period as a spectator, and then the Town assailed the United's goal continuously. Moore made many good saves, and his backs kicked and tackled vigorously. It was all Luton, and everyone confidently expected a goal following brilliant work by Kidd, which left Stephenson with a fine chance a few yards out, but he missed the ball twice in quick succession, and so the interval arrived with the teams level.

LUTON 1
SOUTHEND 1

The second half was almost a repetition. The Town opened with hot pressure, but hasty and ill-directed shooting marred the strenuous efforts. When the visitors had a turn, the Town defenders revealed a jumpiness of nerves that boded ill for the side. Yet Coen saw little of the ball except in the distance. Moore was often in action, and jumped about his goal like a cat on hot bricks. Desperately, the Town strove to break through, but fell again and again when they ran up against the stern opposition. Once Roberts had hard luck when he got in a drive which had Moore beaten all the way, but the ball clumped the bar and rebounded, and Crompton could not keep the ball down when it came out to him.

DILATORY FORWARDS

Stephenson made good runs, and generally had the better of his engagements with Nelson, but the inside forwards could make little impression. Moore, who had been damaged two or three times in the crush, was hurt in repelling another effort by Roberts. Southend's forwards were kept in subjection for a very long spell, though once Oswald got clear away and cut into goal, only to muff his chance when he was at close quarters. The Town replied again, but there was no co-operation among the forwards at close quarters, and, if a shot were put in, there was lack of pace or aim. The attack might have been correctly termed a bombardment had the forwards taken their shooting chances.

"COME ON, STEVENS"

It was Stevens who regained the lead for the visitors, and another fine shot it was. There did not appear to be any danger when Fellowes secured while facing his own goal; had he had the confidence to tap the ball along to Coen, the goalkeeper could have cleared comfortably. Instead he hooked the ball to the Southend right; Firth, glad of such chances, took possession, and slipped the ball along the ground to STEVENS, who had Coen well beaten with another well-placed drive just inside the post.

Play was in the Southend half for the rest of the game. The visitors concentrated on defence, and some of them also did their best to waste time, Spelman especially, but this was discounted by the referee. Once the game was held up for three minutes while the Southend trainer gave an exhibition of massage treatment to Moore. Only once did the visitors become dangerous again, and it was through the quickness of Stevens in beating Finlayson, who dalled, that the Southend centre-forward robbed him, and banged in a shot that skimmed the bar. Luton put in all they knew, but it was too little, and they had to retire beaten.

THE PLAYERS

Coen had only about half-a-dozen shots to deal with during the match. Finlayson apart from the fault of being rather deliberate, played a cool and reliable game. Hubbard was a bit wild in his kicking, but showed dash and had the better of his arguments with Demellweek, though Firth was a bit too lively for him. Fellowes was certainly no improvement on Nelson, hard though he worked. Payne will have to take his game much more seriously, though he showed up well at times, and Kidd was the most vital factor of the line, both in defence and attack.

The forwards were very disappointing again. Roberts was slow, and Andrews did not reproduce the form he had shown in the Reserves' games. Crompton worked hard without much luck and Stephenson was, perhaps, as good as any forward on the field. Ball was 50 per cent. more aggressive than in previous games, but is still a long way behind the speed and the skill of the leadership of last season.

SOUTHEND'S QUALITY

Southend will not be at the head of the table, but they will occupy a very different position from that of last season, and it will be through their team-work and opportunism. Moore kept goal well, as he usually does at Luton. None knows better than he that he should have had a great deal more work, and should not have been given the chance to save on several occasions. Nelson was a sturdy and steady defender, though Stephenson could beat him, and Robinson was just the hard and dashing little defender we have known so well in the past. Turner played a fine game at centre-half, always a defensive player, seldom straying far from his penalty area. His colleagues were worriers. Stevens was a capital leader—a real opportunist, but he owed much to Firth, who showed much cleverness in control. The others were useful, and, as a whole, the United showed far better team-work.

There were 15,951 spectators paid for admission, receipts being £760