

BEATEN BY BAD DECISIONS

LUTON TOWN'S GALLANT FIGHT AT READING

Coen in Form

By "CRUSADER")

READING	2
(Tait, Liddle)	
LUTON TOWN	1
(Beresford)	
READING:—Whittaker; Done, Robson; Hayhurst, Wright; Liddle, Crook; Tait Paterson, Fielding.	
LUTON: Coen; Kingham, Smith; Finlayson, Fellowes, McGinnigle; Crook, Beresford, Ball, Turner, Crompton, Referee, J. H. Whittle, Worcester.	

VERY LUTON follower who had the optimism sufficient to take him to READING must have returned feeling that he had been dealt a very raw deal. He had decisions resulted in Reading's win, directly or indirectly. I do not remember hearing a home crowd shout more frantically at a linesman than did the Reading folk when Crompton was given offside. From the free kick that accrued me the burst which gave Reading the goal.

In the second instance the other linesman agreed offside against Liddle, the Reading manager immediately: whether Referee Liddle saw the flag or not, I do not know, but seriously doubt if he was even thinking about a linesman. In any event, he missed a goal, and then consulted the linesman without reversing his decision, as everyone expected.

OF THE ONLY ERRORS

Those were not the only errors. A penalty kick was given against Kingham for fisting at the ball when Coen was beaten, but the referee completely missed the fact that Kingham's home inside-left, had also missed the ball to get it past Coen, or there could have been no opportunity for Kingham to have done the same.

Reading Pressmen and supporters were in discussion after the match, and one gentleman in the Press seats expressed himself in no half-measured terms. I could have said the same, if not so fluently, and when I was in the Luton dressing-room after the game, players and officials were very sore about it all. They had reason to be.

HANGES JUSTIFIED

Any doubt about the wisdom of the changes made in the Luton middle line are dispelled long before the interval. So valiantly did the three promoted players sport themselves that the Reading attack was held splendidly, and that in spite of the fact that ten minutes after the start the Town were reduced to ten men.

Crook suffered an ankle injury that caused his retirement, and in the second half he could not walk, let alone run, though he pluckily remained on the field to the end. I thought it would have been better to have had him at outside-left so that Crompton could take his customary position, especially as there was a slight advantage in playing on the side of the field that Crook ventured.

Every member of the side pulled his weight, tore and aft, and it was most unfortunate that they should suffer defeat after such a gallant game.

EARLY EXCHANGES

It was natural that Reading should have the upper hand when they had to play against only ten men, but so well organized was the Town defence that nearly all the hot work that went to Coen came in the way of long-range shots. He had an early hand in a free kick, but the Town soon sent to the other end as a result of Finlayson's shrewdness, and Robson robbed Ball just in time when Crompton swung over a perfect centre.

There was another nice middle from the same source, and Johnson fell back to kick away. Then we had a taste of Tait, who made a tremendous effort and forced a corner, and just afterwards Fellowes, attempting to put back to Coen, sent the ball past the goalkeeper, who had advanced from his charge, but the ball travelled just wide.

TURNER'S DRIVE

Coen had plenty to do, and was on his best behaviour. He punched away splendidly, and made three good saves. Beresford and Crook, well backed by Finlayson, urged the

ball to the other end, and the ball was sent up the middle to Ball, who had a wide space with Hayhurst out of the way, but shot hurriedly and tamely for Whittaker to clear. Turner did better when he had a chance, and his powerful drive was fielded by the home goalkeeper only with great difficulty.

In a Reading rush came the penalty incident, and there was a groan from the spectators as Done's shot went a couple of yards wide. Crook retired after trying to hobble about, but in a quick sally Ball turned the ball across to Crompton, who could have done better than shoot into Whittaker's hands.

LUTON LEAD

Hard work by Ball compelled Done to give a corner, and Crompton sent the flag-kick into the crowd; Ball's head diverted it goalwards, and Whittaker, at full stretch, only just managed to push the ball out; BALL, Beresford, and Turner closed on him, and, though Whittaker managed to push the ball out again, he was too late. It appeared as though Beresford put the ball through, but actually Turner shot against the goalkeeper, and Ball headed in from the rebound.

HARD PRESSED

A miskick by Smith gave Liddle a great chance to equalise, but he shot wide, and, in another desperate attack, McGough headed behind. Ball and Beresford tried to barge a way through, and there was a lot of heavy shoulder work, but all the players lost the ball, and it trickled to Whittaker, who was glad to get it away Half-time!

LUTON TOWN	1
READING	0

Crook resumed after the interval, but he merely stood on the touchline and tried to kick the ball when it came right to him. Reading took up the threads where they had left off, but they met with no better success, and there was much more danger from the somewhat lone raids that Ball made. Cleverly beating the backs, the Town centre-forward lifted the ball right in front, and Crompton got it under control neatly, but was so long making up his mind to shoot that Whittaker had dashed out and flung himself on the ball, and the chance was gone.

BRILLIANT SAVES

Then there was a busy time through the energy of Tait, and Kingham and Smith shone in clearances, while Fellowes held up the Reading leader in great style several times. Coen brought off a grand full-length save from Paterson, and then Tait broke clean through, but Coen raced out, and dived to take the ball off the forward's boot. He was loudly applauded for the courageous effort.

Turner and Beresford made good attempt, to turn the tide of the game, but the home defenders usually got there first, and Whittaker had not a lot of work. The home team felt the game slipping, and grew rather wild in their efforts, and the Town defenders played with no diminution of confidence. Turner led an assault, and, from his pass, Ball headed the ball past the backs, and Crompton rushed up, but shot wide when the goalkeeper came out. Within a couple of minutes, Ball gave Crompton another chance, and once more he failed to get the right direction on his shot as Whittaker came out.

The crowd had been shouting for Fielding to do something, and he did it. Coen made fine saves from him, and then there was a sudden shout when the Town got away, and a grand shot by Turner flew only inches too high.

The Town forwards played well now, and the left-wing pair generally had Done in a tight corner.

LINESMAN'S BLUNDER

Another movement in which Ball beat the opposition and flung the ball across to the left found Crompton sailing past the backs at speed, and the crowd were amazed when the linesman on the other side of the field gave him offside. Crompton had as good a chance with this as with any previous pass, and it was this decision which was the first blow to the Town. From the flag-kick there was a rush on the Reading right, and the ball was sent out; Hayhurst and TAIT rushed the defence, and the latter got in a flying shot which had Coen beaten all the way.

AND THE REFEREE'S

The Town did not lose heart, and Whittaker had to save two or three times, and the ball went to the other end, where Smith and McGinnigle, in turn, got the ball away. Hayhurst, now with the attack, headed over, and then came another burst on the left. The ball was centred, and Tait headed out to the right where Liddle was unmarked. The linesman flagged against him, and Coen hesitated just a trifle, apparently sure of offside, and when he came on he could not gather the ball, and it was rushed in by LIDDLE and Tait, the former applying the finishing touch.

The referee went over to consult the linesman, and then adhered to his decision that it was a goal.

THE VALIANT VANQUISHED

The Town came to the attack with intense energy, and Ball raced out to the right, and drove in a glorious shot from which Whittaker made his best save of the match, just managing to lift the ball over the bar. Reading replied, and Coen saved from Tait, and then the home team had to concentrate on defence to keep out the Town forwards and half-backs, and even Smith came right up to try his luck. All to no purpose, and the Town retired vanquished, but deserving honour for their magnificent fight under great handicap.

STEADY DEFENCE

Coen put up one of his best games. He has evidently now regained full confidence, and his handling was clean, while his judgment was never at fault. He was well applauded by the crowd many times. Kingham and Smith again played finely, and appear to be right back at their best of last season. Now and then, one or other made a miskick, but, under such heavy pressure, that was excusable.

Fellowes merited the opinion of Tom Tait that he is the best pivot in the Southern Section. He beat Tait again and again, and this was his best game also. What a magnificent half Finlayson would be if he had a trifle more pace. His shrewdness in tackling, and his use of the ball was often superb, and he kept it down better than any other middleman in the game. Had he the pace of Billy Brown he would be just as good as the former Luton player. McGinnigle put up his customary dour game, working with all his might all the time.

FORWARDS HANDICAPPED

Crook's hurt denied him a chance to

(Continued in next column)