

GRAND GAME AND GREAT WIN

LUTON STAGGER BRISTOL CITY BY REVIVAL

STEPHENSON COMES OUT OF HIS SHELL Brilliant Coen

(By CRUSADER)

LUTON TOWN 2
(Ball, Stephenson)
BRISTOL CITY 1
(Lane)

BRISTOL CITY.—Wilson; Roberts, Bridge; Morgan, Pearce, Brinton; Hodge, Armstrong, Lane, White, Randall.

LUTON TOWN.—Coen; Booton, Smith; Finlayson, Nelson, Fellowes; Rich, Martin, Ball, Roberts, Stephenson.

Referee.—J. H. Whittle, Worcester.

BRISTOL CITY had won four of their last five games at home, and drawn four of the last six away. With conditions as they are no team looked good for success at Ashton Gate, and undoubtedly there were hundreds of people in Luton and district who thought the Town would have to forfeit their leadership when the City had finished with them.

Possibly some of the stories you have read about the game have led you to the opinion that once more Dame Fortune smiled more happily upon Luton than upon Bristol. Do not believe it. Honours were fairly evenly divided in a grand game considering the conditions, and the Town scored a great win because of their ability to find a little more stamina and resource when it was most needed.

THE DIFFERENCE

The difference between the teams was patent to anyone with experience of the game. The City played hurried football; racing and lacing about at top speed; kicking the ball harder than was necessary, and rushing and tumbling into the opposition enthusiastically. And the Town sized up the strength of the attack and the rashness of the defence so well that, even though Coen had to make brilliant saves, there were more narrow escapes for the City goal than for that of the Town.

RICH MOVES

The City started at a rare pelt, and Coen was soon in action, but he had time to see the ball, for his colleagues covered well, and yet gave him their confidence, and allowed him to take the ball frequently when they themselves might have cleared at some risk. Martin and Rich were soon doing things, however, and an early corner was forced, but, when this was cleared, the City hurried to the other end where the defensive play was cool and steady.

The first thrill came when a beautiful pass by Martin sent Rich clear, and he left the opposition gasping as he tore in; Wilson dashed out of goal, and the ball flashed past him; he turned round and must have breathed his heartfelt thanks to see the ball rebounding from the side net. Another foot to the left, and the goal would have fallen.

ON THE ACTIVE LIST

The City kept play in the Town half without threatening severely, and nearly all the attacks came from the respective right wings. Hodge and Rich were well served by their mates, and so Smith on the one hand and Bridge on the other were kept on the active list. Strong and relentless tackling held up each attack, but the game was cleanly fought, and there were few free kicks, while the goalkeepers were so well protected that shots from close range were rare events.

BALL DOES IT

So play proceeded without either side gaining the upper hand until very nearly half an hour had elapsed. Then there came a move for which we had been waiting. Stephenson had been almost quiescent, for Roberts, strong and resolute, was playing right on top of him. The full-back advanced too far up the field, however, and either Martin or Finlayson drew the defence to the right then shot out a long ball to the left. Stephenson took it in his stride, left Bristol's Roberts right out of the picture, and scooted in until he was within a yard or two of the upright; then Pearce made a desperate hustle, only to find the ball switched gentle to BALL, who tapped it past the goalkeeper.

DELIBERATE IN DEFENCE

The City worked harder than ever after this, and there were times when the Town defenders appeared to be much too deliberate, and even Coen himself was disposed to delay his clearances in order to invite a fruitless dash. As a result, the nippy Lane caused a lot of trouble in the vicinity of goal, and it was a free kick that brought relief.

However, the City were now on their mettle, and Coen was kept constantly on the alert, and his skill in averting a goal

on one occasion brought congratulations from Lane himself. Booton was doing well against a lively left wing, and, when the Town forwards got going again, they swarmed round the City goal, and Wilson had a lot of anxiety before relief was won, for shots from each of the five forwards were very close, and Pearce and Roberts headed out well following corner-kicks.

Lane made a good effort just before the change of ends, dribbling through well, but Nelson was with him at the last, and bundled him just as he was shooting, and the ball went wide. Half-time came with the Town ahead.

LUTON TOWN 1
BRISTOL CITY 0

Coen featured chiefly in the early stages of the second half, and with the City fighting desperately to get on terms, the Town custodian was often tested very severely. Shots were sent in from all angles, and many corners were forced, but the flag kicks usually found the Town defenders head-high first, and the ball was got away.

COEN'S SAVES

Coen's ability to punch away from flag kicks was also useful, and for a long time the City refused to be repelled. Once White drove across goal, and Lane deftly turned the ball to the other side of goal, but Coen was there and handed the ball over the bar. Then the goalkeeper snatched the ball off White's feet, and the sporting crowd cheered the goalkeeper again and again.

The Town forwards were not idle. The inside men assisted the defence well, and when Rich darted through and lifted the ball right across goal, Stephenson slipped round the burly Roberts and came well in; Wilson rushed out, and the ball went past him, and also past the goal, only a few inches out of the right direction.

The City never relaxed their efforts, however, and Coen brought off another wonderful save when Armstrong shot strongly for the farther end of goal, the goalkeeper putting the ball round the post. Play became rather vigorous, but there was little fault to find in that respect, and pure accidents resulted in Lane and Morgan being hurt, and the latter had to retire for a few moments.

BRILLIANT ATTACKS

Then came another escape for the City goal; Stephenson slipped through again, beat the opposition, and lifted the ball over Wilson's head as the goalkeeper came out; a goal seemed certain when Bridge dropped in the place of Wilson and headed out. The Town now took command, and the City goal was assailed again and again following clever combination. Martin and Fred Roberts were prominent with skilful footwork, and Finlayson and Fellowes joined in the attacks.

Ball took a pass from Rich, and was right through, but the ball beat him for pace at the finish. Wilson made a splendid save from Martin, and Fred Roberts shot high. Then Finlayson beat five opponents with wonderful footwork and strength, resisting tackles and charges until he was clear of everything, but his shot as the goalkeeper rushed out went just wide.

ALL SQUARE AGAIN

Bridge relieved again just in time when Wilson was hopelessly beaten, and the same player managed to get his foot to the ball just before Rich turned up to meet a centre from Stephenson right on the goal-line. For a long time the Town had the City defence battling stubbornly and successfully, and then came the swing of the game to the City.

Booton handled near the half-way line, and the free kick was well placed by Brinton; the ball was headed out, and the Town defenders came forward; the ball was sent back, and Coen appealed vainly for offside against LANE, who was all on his own save for the Town goalkeeper, and turned the ball just inside the post.

CLOSE SHAVES FOR THE CITY

The City strove hard to get the lead, and Coen and his co-defenders were sore and pressed for a few minutes, but Booton and Smith kicked and tackled coolly, and Nelson's headwork and his long stride forestalled Lane. Then the switch turned again, and Luton once more took command. There were beautiful passing runs by Stephenson, and three or four times he raced round the opposition and shot hard across goal, having hard luck as the ball struck defenders who were fortunate to be in the way.

Three good shots were turned aside in this way when the goalkeeper was completely beaten, and another went right across goal without anyone touching it and missed again by inches only. Yet another run by the Town left-wing pair brought a lofty centre from Stephenson, and Rich had run in just a yard too far, or he could hardly have missed heading a goal.

THE WINNER

When the winning goal came it was the result of a grand bit of combination between Ball and Stephenson. They passed and re-passed their way right through the defence, and Ball finally tapped the ball forward for STEPHENSON to sprint hard past the City right-back and as Wilson rushed out the ball crashed past him soon high and raced round the inside of the net.

The referee, who was close up with the play, promptly awarded a goal, but the linesman flagged, and for what reason was hard to say, because every pass had beaten a man, and the City right-back was right between goal and Ball and Stephenson when the final pass was made, and both players were behind the ball. The City players made no appeal, but the yells of the crowd round the linesman called their attention to that official, and they besought the referee to consult him. He did so, but shook his head and returned to the centre.

A PERFECT GOAL

It was a perfect goal, and there was no real question of offside, but immediately the game was resumed Rich forced Bridge to put the ball over his own goal-line. The same linesman was on the spot, but pointed for a goal kick, although the referee was walking to the goal for a corner kick, but he accepted the flag, and this time awarded a goal kick.

The City tried hard to break through the Town defence in the last few minutes, but Coen and his backs were unbeatable, and the Town forwards opened out the game well, and gave more trouble at the other end, Ball and Rich each going close, while Fred Roberts shot past after another clever move with Stephenson.

COOLER AND MORE METHODICAL

The game was well won by the cooler and more methodical side, especially in defence. Coen was superb, and the difference between the two goalkeepers was that Coen was on the spot and saved, while Wilson time after time rushed out of goal and saw the ball fly past him and miss narrowly. Booton and Smith both played finely, though I still think they allow the wingers too much time to get the ball under control, and as a result have a lot of chasing that should not be necessary.

Smith was handicapped by a large boil on the back of his neck, but played so whole-heartedly that it might have been a spur instead of a check. Nelson's steadiness, perhaps still a little too deliberate at times, rounded off a sturdy and unyielding defence, and the kicking all round was of good length and sure. Booton often defeated the opposition by an unexpected stab with the left foot that robbed an individualist and sent the ball to his own forwards.

ATTACKING SPIRIT

Finlayson and Fellowes were some time before they got the hang of things in defence, which confirms my opinion that the backs are hanging too far back, but both did splendid work for their forwards, particularly in the second half. Rich and Martin took most of the kudos before the change of ends, but afterwards Roberts and Stephenson were at their best, and their spectacular runs and passing menaced the City goal very severely.

Stephenson had no luck whatever with his shooting, or he might have had nearly half-a-dozen goals, so often did he beat the goalkeeper. Ball worked hard and led the line capably, and distributed neatly, and Rich, again ably fed by Martin, fully confirmed my view of his first match that he is just about the best winger we have had since the day of Sid Hoar.

CITY WORKERS

Wilson had a tremendous lot of luck, for few goalkeepers could have hoped to have seen so many shots pass him and just miss the target. He was not to blame for the goals that beat him. Roberts played his customary hurly-burly game, rushing about and kicking strongly, tackling desperately, too, but he had more than he could hold in the second period.

Bridge was less conspicuous, but did well, and all the halves were quick and resolute. I liked Morgan quite as much as Brinton, for he was very clever in feeding his forwards, and Pearce was stubborn as ever at centre-half.

Hodge played his best game yet against the Town, but Lane was the pick of the attack.