

Nearly Baulked Luton of First Victory

NELSONS AT BAY

(By CRUSADER)

LUTON TOWN 1
(Payne)

SOUTHEND UNITED 0

LUTON.—Dolman; Mackey, Smith; Finlayson, Nelson, Godfrey; Crompton, Lutterloch, Payne, Roberts, Stephenson.

SOUTHEND.—McKenzie; Nelson, Everest; Deacon, Turner, Carr; Bolan, Firth, Graham, Egan, Willshaw.

Referee: W. J. Lewington, Croydon.

Payne's goal came forty-three minutes after the start, and was characteristic. Crompton had forced a corner, and placed the ball well. PAYNE, who had taken up position well to the right of McKenzie, judged the fall of the ball to a nicety, and dashed in to head the ball downwards, and the Southend custodian was helpless to avert a goal at such short range.

This one goal gave a lot of comfort to Luton supporters, if only for the reason that it enabled the Town to start the season with a victory, and actually meant a net gain of two points as compared with last season's beginning.

That means a great deal more than is apparent, for we knew to our cost at the end of last season what great value is bound up in a brace of points.

When I have said that it is a good beginning, however, I cannot say much more, for there will be during the week considerable difference of opinion among the followers as to whether the Town deserved to win.

WIN WAS JUST MERITED

On the run of the play and the amount of pressing they did as compared with the visitors I thought the full spoils were just merited by the winners, and that without depreciating the strength and fighting qualities of the opposition, or shutting my eyes to the little misfortunes they suffered.

The Town had their share, too, and there was a glaring case of a penalty kick that was denied to them because the referee had his eyes elsewhere.

I do not wish to say too much about him, however, for I have said enough on previous occasions, and all I will add here is that he has served the Town team worse in other matches than he did in this.

CONDITIONS SHOULD BE CONSIDERED

Those who have played the game will not be inclined to criticise too severely a very moderate display—much below what was expected. That does not apply altogether to the whole team, for there was little in which the defence could be faulted. Experienced players know perfectly well how difficult control is on a hard ground even when the weather is more seasonable than it was on Saturday.

When the heat is eighty degrees in the shade, however, ball control and play altogether is bound to suffer, because there is a constant drain on the energy of players, and not a few lost a good deal of weight during the game.

It would have been interesting to have had the players weighed before and after the match, just to gather how much was taken out of them by their exertions.

While things were normal there could be little question about the Town being well on top; for half-an-hour they were pressing strongly, and were foiled by a clever and sturdy defence.

The pace of the ball could not be estimated by the forwards or the halves, and time and again a well-meant pass sped over the turf and beat the speediest of the wingers.

In this respect I was inclined to the view that the inside forwards and the wing halves of the visitors were more accurate, but the pace of the Town players was quite as much as the visiting defenders wanted; McKenzie had far more to do than Dolman, even though it was not particularly difficult except for rare instances.

A MENACING CUSTOMER

When Southend did make a move, however, they swung the ball about well, and Bolan especially was a menacing customer. Two or three times the Town defenders were caught almost anyhow, and the goal had escapes that were not expected on the run of the game for the first quarter-of-an-hour.

Similarly, however, Payne had hard luck with at least one effort at the other end, and Tom Smith took a hand in

attack twice, and caused trouble to the visiting defenders.

It struck me that the visitors had been told to play to a plan in defence, and they did it well; they eschewed all risk, tackled and kicked first time, and so kept their goal safe until Payne scored.

A THRILLING CHALLENGE

In the second half Southend made a thrilling challenge; they put in all they knew, and several times it was odds on the levelling of the scores.

McKenzie still had more opportunity of showing his prowess than had Dolman, but the latter looked on helplessly once when Graham rushed through a tired defence and appeals for offside were nullified; he went straight to the goal, just a little to the right, and from close quarters he crashed the ball at goal; had he kept his head and placed the ball he could not have missed, but the mighty shot struck the bar and came out, and eventually the danger was cleared.

That was the best chance of the game and was a very bad mistake by a player who tried his utmost to do something well.

PENALTIES THAT WERE NOT

Town supporters were worried by the continuous effort of the visitors, now all out for a goal, and at this stage the excellence of Jack Nelson and his backs was magnificent. Many other players seemed fatigued, and could not get dash into their play.

To make matters worse, Payne was hurt by Everest, and fouled, but there was no



penalty, nor was there when either Everest or Turner turned the ball behind with his hands.

Southend's spirited rallies were thwarted, and then there were more or less desultory raids by the Town, but neither side looked very much like getting a goal, the defences being as sound as could be desired.

OF INDIVIDUALS

Dolman had little to do, thanks to the judicious work of his backs and Nelson.

All these three were in capital trim, and it will be a big surprise to me if we reach Christmas without very definite attempts being made by important clubs to break up, by the power of the purse, the defensive combination.

Smith is better than ever, and Mackey and Nelson each won applause time after time.

Finlayson did very good work, but seemed to tire in the second half, and Godfrey did not get going so well as we all wished or anticipated. However, they showed good team spirit, and that meant a lot.

FORWARDS

The forward line was much below standard, and there was not a man that played at his best, although each tried his best. I liked Roberts as well as any, although there was not much showiness about his play, but Stephenson did not have a very good time against Nelson, nor did Crompton against Everest. Lutterloch was always a trier, but less effective than expected, while Payne did not get much rope from Turner. However, it was a fine goal he scored, and that meant compensation.

SOUTHEND'S BEST

McKenzie is not a big fellow, but he can keep goal. Nelson is a steady and sturdy player still, and was the big man of the side. Everest worked well with him, and Turner, never very far from his goal-keeper, was a strong defensive player.

I liked the wing halves for the way they played to their forwards, but of the latter I did not think there was much to choose as between them and the Luton five.

Bolan was a dangerous winger, and Willshaw is likely to make good. The inside forwards worked well, but usually fell prey to the watchful opposition.

The attendance was an augury of what we may expect when we get football weather and the team is better together—14,443 paying for admission.