

STEPHENSON SCORES

One Goal Sufficient at Walsall

NELSON THE HERO OF GREAT DEFENCE

By CHILTERN

LUTON TOWN 1
(Stephenson)

WALSALL 0

WALSALL: Leckie; Jones, Wiles; Richmond, Morgan, Bradford; Woolhouse, Landells, Evans, Harwood, Bulger.

LUTON TOWN: Dolman; Mackey, Smith; Finlayson, Nelson, Fellowes; Hodge, Martin, Mills, Roberts, Stephenson.

Referee: G. Dutton, Warwick.

Stephenson once more proved that he is a match winner of the first degree last night at Fellows Park where Luton Town beat Walsall by the only goal of the game. This was obtained by the left winger 14 minutes from the end, and it meant another two points which will be invaluable at the close of the season.

To beat the Saddlers on their own enclosure is a performance of the highest merit and no credit is too good for the Town players who strained every nerve to win the points. It was a battle between brains and brawn from start to finish. Luton had the brains, and the home side the other element.

FORWARDS FRAIL

The Town played lovely football at times, but it gained them little, and the forwards were rarely really dangerous.

A hefty defence saw to that, and the tackling was altogether too robust for the rather frail Luton forwards. They were clever enough, but the rough and ready play of the defence knocked them off their feet.

Once more no fault could be found with the defence, and there was an all round improvement in the half-back line. Many times last season, the rearguard was responsible for the retention of the points, and so it was last night.

NELSON THE HERO

Jack Nelson was a hero. He played a magnificent game, and his cool head pulled the Town out of innumerable difficulties. He broke up attack after attack in his unassuming way, and he was a barrier the rather crude Walsall forwards could not surmount.

During the periods the home team pressed, and they were quite frequent, Nelson was like a rock and if there is a better centre-half in the Third League, or in the Second Division for that matter I should like to see him. He is the keystone of the Luton team, and his colleagues on the wings, Finlayson and Fellowes, backed him to the last ounce.

Finlayson played far and away better than on Saturday, and Fellowes was a great worker. Both the wing halves gave the opposing forwards little time to think, and their work deserved the highest praise.

REARGUARD SAFE

Mackey gave another outstandingly good display, and absolutely refused to be beaten.

He kicked well, and received sound support from Tom Smith. Both were fearless, and so well did they cover Dolman that the goalkeeper had only one direct shot to save during the game. He had to run out to clear once or twice, and picked up the ball in the cleanest possible fashion.

The defence as a whole was as safe as a bank, and it was particularly pleasing to see the improvement in the intermediate line.

THE FORWARD PROBLEM

We were given ample reason for believing that there are still forward problems to be solved, and there was a definite lack of punch about the line as a whole. They had very few shots at goal—they could be counted on the fingers of one hand—and the ball was generally kept much too close.

CHANGES FOR THE BETTER

The right wing changes, however, were for the better, and George Martin put in grand work. It was his first game of the season, for he played in neither public practice match, nor on Saturday. In the first half he was the chief schemer, and displayed brilliant footwork, but was inclined to do that little extra which was not necessary. Still, he made beautiful passes, but in the second half tired perceptibly, although continuing to play wholeheartedly.

Hodge, his partner, did many clever things, and centred the ball well, but is still disinclined to take the ball on, and is frequently in a hurry to part. His lack of weight was a big handicap.

MILLS'S WATCHDOG

I felt sorry for Mills, who was making his debut in the first team. He worked tremendously hard, but was blotted out time after time by Morgan, a well-built centre-half. Moreover, the bulk of the passes he received were in the air, and he did not get up to them. When he did, he found that Morgan, who followed him round like a faithful watchdog was higher than he.

Roberts failed to strike his best form, and we had only glimpses of what he can do. He showed several bursts of brilliant footwork only to spoil things by a badly-made pass; the ball would not run for him. He worked like a slave, but was not getting there, and it was only occasionally that we saw the real Roberts.

Stephenson was good in spasms, but found a defence that was not in the mood to wait before tackling. He got the goal which won the match, and, apart from that, made many splendid runs and centres, but he, too, was not up to his best. He

had not much room in which to work, and was well marked throughout.

The small ground evidently militated against the Town team, and they were often cramped.

The surface was in splendid condition, apart, of course, from the rather deceptive slope.

DESERVED THE POINTS

The Town deserved the points, for Walsall rarely showed a decently-constructed movement, and their tactics were mainly of the kick-and-rush variety. Still, it was a thoroughly interesting game from start to finish. The home side tried to bore their way through, and Luton tried to weave theirs. It was a vivid contrast in styles, and science triumphed in the end.

The home side used their weight, but the game was a clean one, and there was no bad or malicious foul, all credit being due to the referee, whose control was admirable.

As far as territorial advantage went, there was little or nothing between the teams in the first half, but, for a spell after the interval, the home defence was thoroughly rattled, and the impression I drew was that, if Luton managed to get one goal, they would win comfortably. They had desperately bad luck on two or three occasions, and then the play evened once more.

Where Luton failed most was by keeping the ball in the air, where the tall home defenders got it nearly every time except, of course, when it was in the region of Nelson. The light ball was difficult to keep down, but it could have been played on the ground more.

Still it was a welcome victory, and has given the Town a proud start.

THE PLAY

Luton won the toss, and Walsall were first to attack, Mackey clearing well. Bradford then swung the ball into the goalmouth, and there were many anxious moments before Dolman cleared. At the other end, Mills showed delightful footwork, and centred, but there was no one near enough to take advantage of the chance. The Town forwards made a brilliant, combined movement, which was spoilt by Hodge putting his centre behind the rest of the line.

The nearest approach to a goal came when Finlayson hooked the ball into the centre, and Stephenson headed across with Leckie out of his charge. Once again, there was no Luton player close enough to apply the finishing touch.

ESCAPES

Then Evans had the chance of a lifetime when Nelson for once misjudged a high ball, but the centre-forward shot across the goal, and Woolhouse, cutting-in, missed his kick completely. Harwood then broke clean through, but Dolman came out to take the ball from his toes.

A clever passing movement by Roberts and Stephenson ended in the former getting too much lift under the ball, and sending it high over. A splendid chance fell to Hodge shortly afterwards when Roberts squared the ball across to him. The winger shot rather tamely, and the ball hit the post, and bounced across to hit Leckie on the legs as he fell, and go for a fruitless corner.

Walsall took up the offensive once more, and Fellowes was knocked out in clearing what was developing into a dangerous situation. Play again veered to the other end, and Roberts made a worthy effort with a header which was just wide. Half-time:

WALSALL	0
LUTON	0

At the beginning of the second half, Hodge was prominent with a good centre which Mills chased, but Leckie just beat him to it. Luton took the upper hand, and for some minutes had the Walsall defence running the wrong way. Fellowes initiated a movement, and the ball went to Mills, whose shot was charged down; then Hodge drove against a defender. The Town continued to press, and the homesters were dangerous only in breakaway. The Town half-backs were supporting the forwards in grand style, but the latter could not finish off their attacks.

SADDLERS IMPROVE

After a time the Saddlers began to have more of the play, and Bulger should have given them the lead, but he shot high over the bar from close range. Following that, a free-kick was awarded against Martin, and Landells sent wide. The Town went away again, and Hodge, after beating his man cleverly, put the ball weakly over the bar.

Fourteen minutes from the end, Hodge took a corner and placed it along the ground. Finlayson secured possession and swung the ball across the left to STEPHENSON; the winger had difficulty in bringing it under control, but did so, and shot into the far corner of the net.

A few minutes later, Bulger beat Mackey for possession, and shot for the top corner of the net, but Dolman brought off a wonder save at the expense of a corner.

Then we had the unusual spectacle of Nelson taking the ball up the wing and centreing. Walsall pressed in the closing stages, but could not break down a great defence, and the end came with Luton worthy winners of a gruelling game.