

City Have All the Luck at Cardiff

MARGIN OF THREE GOALS FLATTERS HOME SIDE

By CHILTERN

CARDIFF CITY 3
Smith (C) 2, Pugh

LUTON TOWN 0

CARDIFF CITY. — Fielding; Granville, Scott; Nicholson, Bassett, Godfrey; Pugh, Pinxton, Smith (C.), Talbot, Owenstone.

LUTON TOWN.—Dolman; Mackey, Smith (T.); Finlayson, Nelson, Fellowes; Hodge, Martin, Mills, Roberts, Stephenson.
Referee.—E. Gamson Kidderminster.

LUTON TOWN did not hit the high spots at CARDIFF, but there is no need for panic, for most good teams will be beaten just as decisively at Ninian Park before the season is out. The City are not a great side, but are more than useful, and although they deserved their victory, the margin of three goals flattered them.

The Town did not show their best form by a long way, and once more proof was forthcoming that more punch and life is needed in the forward line. At the moment there is no one with enough weight to upset a big defence, and it is essential in this League to have a big centre-forward in the side with a shot in each boot.

TOO CLEVER?

The forwards are playing clever football, but, I am afraid, too clever, and not shooting half enough. At Cardiff there was no doubt that Luton's combination was superior, but when it came to finishing, they failed utterly.

Mills is clever, and shows brilliant footwork, but can get nothing out of a big centre-half, such as he has met at Walsall and Cardiff. Pretty play is all very well if it is bringing goals, but as soon as it fails so to function, its usefulness ceases. That may seem a harsh thing to say, but it is true. Points are won by goals, and every week there are sides beaten who are streets ahead of opponents in scientific play. That is what happened to Luton at Cardiff.

LUCK WITH CARDIFF

It is true that the City had all the luck that was going, and that the ball ran for them in amazing fashion, but they got the goals, and had men in the front line able to seize chances and shoot without delay.

I am saying nothing against the ability of the players in the Luton forward line. They have it, and are all triers, but Third League football has come to a point when it is essential to have at least a couple of big men in the line, and men who shoot on every possible occasion. It has been unfortunate that Payne has been on the injured list, otherwise we might have seen a different story, for in my opinion he is the type of centre-forward necessary.

Big and strong, he can bore his way through, and with him in form we may see all the difference in the world in the front line.

NOT GETTING ANYWHERE

The other forwards are not playing badly but are not getting anywhere. We know how brilliant Roberts and Stephenson can be, but they have not got going properly, and are showing their real form only in flashes. Roberts is always a slow starter, but he showed a decided improvement on his form at Walsall without giving Stephenson adequate support.

Stephenson made a fool of Granville quite often, and if there was a weakness in the rugged Cardiff defence, it was here. However, he did not get enough of the ball, and did not finish as well as he should. Martin played a hard game, and was perhaps the best forward. He schemed, foraged and made openings, but often kept the ball too close. It must have been one of his unlucky days, for he was the most dangerous near goal, and time after time missed by inches, or Fielding made a lucky save. George deserved to score, but just could not get the ball through.

HODGE SHOULD SHOOT MORE

For clever footwork alone, Hodge vied with Pugh, his counterpart in the home team, a coming international if ever I saw one. However, the Luton outside-right spoilt much of his play by failing to get the ball across. He does not get on with it, and fiddles about too much. He seems to be afraid of cutting in and having a shot, and there was one glaring case of this in the first half, when he received the ball in an unmarked position, and instead of "having a go," waited, and then centred.

DID NOT OBTAIN A GRIP

The half-backs never really obtained a grip on the home forwards, and Pugh proved the biggest thorn in their side. A lovely player this. He is young, and if he keeps clear of injury, will make a big name. Smith (C.), a hustler, but a dangerous man, also caused some apprehension, and Nelson did not look after him as well as he might.

Nelson was not so solid as usual, especially in the first half, and the mistake he made, which resulted in Cardiff's second goal, upset him. He showed most of his old form in the second half, and effectively blocked the way up the middle. Perhaps it is that we are so used to seeing Jack in brilliant form that it is too easy to be critical.

Finlayson was too fond of wandering out of position, and several times Mackey found himself facing two forwards and not knowing which to go for. Neither wing-half used the ball to advantage, though Fellowes played strongly against a good wing. Smith found Pugh hard to tackle, and the winger was getting the ball under control before he could reach him. Near the end he sustained a leg injury

and had to go on the wing. Mackey was a stalwart throughout, and when the defence floundered, as it did in the first half, he kept cool and continued to play his usual game.

Dolman had no chance with the shots which passed him, and did all his other work effectively. Bumping matches between him and Smith (C.) provided diversion for the crowd.

EVERYTHING WENT WRONG

The defence as a whole will probably never make such blunders again, and it was one of those days when nothing would go right. It comes to every team, and the longish grass and a troublesome cross wind made the ball play tricks.

This was part of the reason for the City's second goal. Nelson certainly made a mistake, but the ball swerved badly, and he missed it. He was trying to do what he does successfully, probably half a dozen times in a match—get the ball under control in the goalmouth instead of clearing first time. I know he causes some anxiety among supporters when he does this but his very coolness inspires confidence, and it always, or nearly always comes off. This was one of the occasions on which it did not, and had fatal results.

There will probably be plenty of moaning and grumbling among supporters at such a hollow defeat, but they must realise that there are days when nothing will go right, and when an opposing side has all the luck. Every match cannot result in a victory for the Town and, after all the players are human.

CARDIFF'S IMPROVED TEAM

Cardiff have a better team than last season; make no mistake about that. They are not likely to be aspirants for promotion, but many who are will fall at the Ninian Park hurdle. Pugh, I have mentioned, and Talbot is a first-class player who makes good use of the ball. Smith, the former Burnley centre-forward, will score a handful of goals before the season is out and is just the type to upset the best defence.

I liked the Cardiff half-backs; as a line they were strong, and nipped in the bud Luton's over-cleverness. Fielding appeared none too safe in goal, and was fortunate more than once but Scott was a fine full-back.

ROBERTS' ILL LUCK

Had Luton scored in the first half, I am convinced that they would have saved a point. They were two goals in arrears almost before they had settled down, and then came the crowning blow. Just before the interval Roberts shot on the run, and the ball went just too high to land in the net, and hit the corner of the upright and the bar. It was cruel luck. Cardiff were the more impressive before the interval, but in the second half, the Town gave a sample of what they could do, and the City goal underwent severe pressure.

They deserved to score more than once, and then the home side got a snap point which definitely settled the Town's chances of saving the game.

The players can count themselves unlucky to lose by three goals, but they themselves will be the first to admit that they played badly in the first half. They were not together as a team, but if they had shown the form they displayed in the second half all through the game, I am sure we should have returned with a point.

THE GOALS

Cardiff had the better of the opening exchanges, and worried the Town defence for a time. They were not really dangerous, but Smith (C.) burst through, and Dolman had to run out to clear. The first goal came after 17 minutes' play. A corner was forced on the left wing, and this was placed into the goalmouth by Owenstone. Mackey headed clear but the ball went to SMITH (C.), who was waiting a few yards behind the rest of the forwards, and banged the ball through a crowd of players into the net. Dolman was unsighted, and really it was a miracle how the ball went through without touching a defender.

Up to this point the Town had been rather lifeless, but they improved, and the forwards made several smart movements without providing much employment for Fielding. However, just when it seemed that the Town had settled down another shock came, and SMITH (C.) took advantage of Nelson's slip to beat Dolman for a second time. Roberts then shot wide, and later hit the woodwork.

THE THIRD SHOCK

After the interval Luton set about their task in workmanlike fashion, and Fielding was soon brought into action when he had to fist out a shot from Martin. Stephenson hit the side net, and then Granville kicked off the goal-line from Mills. In a Cardiff breakaway Dolman saved in great style from Owenstone. Then came the third shock, Smith (C.) and PUGH made ground on the right wing, and the former slipped the ball through for the winger to cut in, and net as Dolman came out of his goal.

It was hopeless after that, of course, but the Town forwards made a bid for a consolation goal, and were near to securing it on several occasions. However, the big defence made no bones about going into a tackle and, aided by luck, they managed to keep the sheet blank. Near the end, Tom Smith was injured in a hard tackle, and had to go to outside-left. Fellowes and Roberts dropped back, and Stephenson went inside. Smith struggled manfully on the wing, and was able to get two or three centres across, but still no goal came to the Hatters.