

Promotion Rivals Outplayed By Team Work

CRUSADER COMMENTS ON A GREAT VICTORY

LUTON TOWN'S brilliant victory over READING might have been considerably enhanced had the standard of the first half been maintained. Four goals did not by any means exaggerate the superiority of the Town. Every goal was well won, and although we have been told that there was luck in connection with some of them, the Reading goal was very fortunate that it did not fall on other occasions when goals appeared more likely than those which did arrive.

Payne's hat trick was thoroughly deserved; every player who gets goals in these days deserves them, and if they were in a measure simplified because the chances in two instances were fairly comfortable, that does not belittle Payne's opportunism; rather does it enhance the play of his colleagues who made possible the openings, and were not mindful that he reaped the glory.

TEAM WORK

All-round team work won the game almost from the start, and everyone of us will wish the same mettle will permeate the team throughout the campaign. If it does, nothing can stop them from taking the honours. In every department they were the masters of their guests, and the only real flaw in the game was the fact that one or two of the visitors, notably Gregory and Robertson, allowed themselves to become rattled, and infringed the laws of the game.

The former was very fortunate that he was allowed to remain on the field after the incident with Roberts in the second half. It was a pity there was such an occurrence, for Gregory is a fine player, and if he had lapses in his game, he could not be blamed when he was against such a side as Luton were on this day.

CONFIDENCE GAINED

Most of the visitors stood up to their gruelling with good spirit, and none more so than Hayhurst, who had a desperately difficult job to hold the Town forwards in the middle. Most of his time he had to be covering a will-o'-the-wisp, for Ball was adopting just the right game to make things better for Payne, and the centre-forward's unselfishness, and his thoughtful touches, made the openings for all Payne's goals. Others had a part in the initiatory work, and I think we can congratulate ourselves on this fact; it means that the team will gain more confidence in each other, and will tackle every job in the right spirit. What matters who gets the goals if all play together and the victory is won?

BALL AT HIS BEST

Ball has come right back to his lively

best, and that means a lot; he has always been one of the most unselfish players that ever appeared on Luton's ground. Indeed there were times when he might well have gone on and taken a chance, but he preferred to let someone else have a shot. That he missed two good chances himself should count for little in view of the manner in which he led the attack. He has but to keep this style up, and any centre-half will be at a loss to know what to do. He will score goals himself as well as helping others to get them.

HODGE A LIVELY FACTOR

Hodge did not have quite so much to do, but was always a very lively factor in the attack. There was less aggressiveness, or should I say, savageness, on his flank among the defenders, although nothing was given away. Payne gave a few passes, but most of the work that Hodge had came largely through the grand, long, cross passes from Roberts. If for no other reason, I think Roberts earns his place by the manner in which he changes the point of attack, and the opening up of assaults. He also contrives to keep Stephenson busy, and there is no more energetic worker or a better stayer in the game.

LEFT-WING IMPROVES

If Roberts had the right shooting boots what a boon he would be. I think we could walk away with almost every game if he could only find the target with the success that characterises Payne's play. Stephenson rose to the occasion now and then, and did a few clever bits of work, while it was good to see him get home that terrific free kick from twenty yards' range.

NELSON TO THE FORE

Happy as we were to see Joe Payne do his hat trick again, we were just as pleased with the fact that Nelson came right back to his dominating best. Late in the second half he was apt to dribble a lot, perhaps too much, although it should not be overlooked that while he was hanging on to the ball his colleagues were re-covering the goal. At least, that was what they should have been doing, although it could be done much better. If the flank halves will recognise this the defence will be much safer.

ON THE FLANKS

Fellowes again put up a wonderful game, and he also seems to be at his very best of last season. His support was excellent, and he turned up often in the most unexpected places to the discomfort of the opposition. Finlayson also did very well indeed, although a bit slow to the tackle at times. He needs a little more pace to be a great half-back. His skill in feeding the wing, or in driving the ball up the middle when the defence is drawn is an important feature of his game.

REARGUARD

At back Mackey was quite himself. Last season Owen gave him a lot of trouble, but the little fellow did not get much chance this time. The right back rarely put a foot wrong. Smith was a bit loose in his kicking at times, but was again the lively defender that can join in the assaults, and he followed up well. He had a good winger in Watkin to meet, but generally mastered him. Dolman had a few shots to deal with, and did his work cleanly, but he had only about a couple of teasers to stop, and those only because the defenders were taking things easily in the closing stages.

BOUQUETS FOR VISITORS

For the visitors Whittaker played a grand game in goal and had no chance with the shots that found the net. He prevented four or five that seemed certain to score. I have referred to Gregory, who, if he would keep his temper, would be the player I would rather have with me than against me. Done played a useful sort of game, but Hayhurst was the stalwart in defence. Considering the tremendous amount of work that fell upon him, and the lively and persevering character of the Town's inside forwards, Hayhurst merited great praise, and let me say that he never did a thing to call upon him the adverse decision of the referee. His was a sportman's game.

The flank halves of the visitors never got going; although they were hard workers—both. Much the same could be said of the attack. Allen is but a ghost of the Allen that played for Charlton—or is it that he does not get the support? The others worked very hard, but they were never quick enough or wise enough to find a real avenue through the Town defence.