

Reflections on Luton's Victory

BRILLIANT COMBINATION BEATS BRISTOL CITY

A Brace For Ball

(By CRUSADER)

BRISTOL CITY fought hard enough, courageously enough, and, at times, rough enough. That was the best they could do, for they never showed any likelihood of countering Luton Town's polished football by similar methods. It was not so easy a victory as the score suggests, because of the stout-hearted resistance, but that the margin did not exaggerate the difference between the teams was obvious to any spectator.

OTHER GOALS

To those followers in a position to see clearly there was no doubt at all that two more good goals were scored, and what possessed the referee to discount that scored by Payne puzzled everybody. A free kick was given against Payne, and the only assumption was that offside was ruled; Payne actually beat two men to get the goal. If there was any other infringement it was by Pearce in making the tackle on Payne.

STEPHENSON'S SHOT

The other instance was the shot by Stephenson which hit each upright. Stephenson shot very hard, and the ball struck the post rather high up and swerved inwards, screwing away from the net attachment and skewing away to hit the other post and come out; the curious feature was that the referee turned, and, to all intents and purposes, pointed to the centre. There was not the slightest doubt among the crowd that he thought it was a goal, for his back was to the play when the City players lammed the ball away, but he turned and, seeing playing proceeding, he allowed it to go on.

REFEREE'S BAD TIME

This does not in any way stress any fault of the official. He had such a bad time from the crowd that one need say no more than this: the F.A.'s recent instructions to referees about rough play are eminently suitable for Referee Lewington. There were too many infringements that passed without signal or caution. It is certain, however, that the referee did not see two of the City players strike Payne. Personally, I think the referee, with all his faults, did better in this game than in any he has taken in which Luton have been engaged for years.

CITY PLAYERS RATTLED

Several of the City players became badly rattled by their own impotence. The sturdy resistance offered won a great deal of praise, but the appreciation would have been even greater had the tactics been as clean as they were determined. The City were a badly beaten side, and some of them have yet to learn to be able to take defeat with a good will.

A SPLENDID GOALKEEPER

Wilson's goalkeeping averted a terrific hiding for the City; he is a splendid goalkeeper. His leg reach and his sense of positioning extricated his side from very awkward situations, for the defenders could not counter the swift thrusts and the wise passing of the Town attack. Much of the credit for the continuity of the onslaughts could go to the left wing, for they showed better form than in any previous game this season, and the attack, as a line, was more consistent and more in unison than in any other game.

LITTLE FELLOW PLAYED WELL

The City have good forwards, both Peters and Dryden being speedy and clever, but their failings were in the middle line, the units of which had little idea of combination with their forwards, unless one excepts Brinton. The little fellow played well, and did find his forwards with passes, or tried to, but when defenders, halves and backs are moved only by the one idea of tumbling into opponents and getting the ball somehow, and then socking it, well, co-ordinate effort is out of the question.

GRIP RELAXED

Only in the second half when the Town had obviously relaxed their grip were the City in the picture, and then they found flaws in the Town defence. Often last season I was led to say that the end of the campaign would find the Town short of goals. It may be difficult to see the reason for increasing a score when the lead is really substantial, but when promotion is at stake there cannot be too many goals, and this does not merely

apply to goal-getting, but to goal prevention. The defenders were probably more disposed to take things easily than the forwards.

TOWN'S REARGUARD

Dolman's old colleagues did not give him much work, but such as came his way he dealt with coolly enough. Two or three good saves he made in the closing stages. Of the backs, Smith was the more consistent. He kept well up with Peters, and did not give the latter much time to get away with the ball. His kicking was clean and sure, and he used the ball judiciously. Mackey was not at his best, but it may be that the penchant of Finlayson for wandering far away from the orthodox position had something to do with it. In any event Mackey was beaten by Dryden too often for the liking of the crowd. His kicking was good enough, and he emulated Smith in using the ball to advantage, but I thought he allowed Dryden too much rope. Nevertheless, Mackey saved a certain goal late in the second half when he turned up as Dolman was beaten and kicked the ball away from the line. Nelson was masterly as usual; at times just too confident, perhaps.

CLEVER FLANKERS

Finlayson and Fellowes were grand supporters for the attack, and apart from the tendency to stray too far from his flank, Finlayson played grand football. This wandering is good if colleagues are covering up, but not otherwise, especially when one is lacking in pace, and that is one of Finlayson's drawbacks. His footwork, his feeding, and his shooting, were splendid, and Fellowes came into the same line of eulogy. Fellowes and his left wing were as good as at any period last season, and we all remember how big a part they played in the advance of the team.

NOTHING LOP-SIDED

The attack turned out in rare fettle. Their understanding all along the line was fine, and there was nothing lop-sided in the work. The ball was distributed well, and the shooting was on the mark, even though there were chances missed. I wish Ball would use his feet more and shoot more often. It was good to see him get a couple of goals, one with head and one with foot, and he led the City pivot a rare dance by keeping on the move.

PAYNE'S IMPROVEMENT

Payne did better approach work than he has yet attempted, and he is falling into the inside right berth like the natural player he is. He could trick a man and push the ball out to his partner or to the other wing, as well as have a shot. It was the first game in which he has played this season without getting a goal; of course, he did score, but it was disallowed.

LEFT WING'S ADVANCE

Roberts could not help but make one or two bad shots, of course, but he put in grand drives that deserved to score, and his general play was right up to First Division standard. No player varies the point of attack better, and in this game he got more out of Stephenson than has been the case in previous games. Both wingers played well, Stephenson having one of those days when the ball would run kindly for him, and he made the most of it. Hodge enjoyed his game, and is now touching that level that drew upon him so much attention when he was at Bristol.

THE GOALS

The Town had attacked almost continually for the seventeen minutes before STEPHENSON scored. I thought Payne handled the ball before he passed to the winger, but the latter took his chance splendidly.

The City were lucky to be in arrears of only one goal at half-time. They were soon three down, for a spectacular bit of combination on the Town right enabled Hodge to send the ball across squarely, and all BALL had to do was to nod it into the net. Two minutes later BALL was partly foiled by Pearce, but got the ball again and hit it, and had the satisfaction of seeing it curl into the net by the farther post.

Three or four minutes from the end there was a sweeping pass to the right by Roberts, I think, and Bridge just failed to reach the ball; HODGE darted in with the ball well under control, and after making ground rapidly he calmly lifted the ball over Wilson's head as the goalkeeper advanced, and it landed safely in the net—a natty goal.