

WELL BEATEN AFTER GRUELLING GAME

Town Defence Tires in Second Half

(By CHILTERN)

NORTHAMPTON TOWN 3

(Rawlings (2), Lyman)

LUTON TOWN 1

(Payne)

NORTHAMPTON TOWN.—Gormlie; Russell, Little; Riches, Thayne, Simpson; Rawlings, Hewitt, Allen, Tolland, Lyman.

LUTON TOWN.—Coen; Mackey, Smith; Finlayson, Nelson, Fellowes; Hodge, Payne, Ball, Roberts, Stevens.

Referee: A. W. Smith, Birmingham.

LUTON TOWN were well and truly beaten in their "Derby" match at NORTHAMPTON. There can be little argument about that; once more their form away from home was unreliable.

They had a great following and deserved every credit for holding the Cobblers to a goalless draw in the first half, when they had to play against the wind. On that performance we had every reason to hope for a point, and the more sanguine were anticipating a win.

On the form displayed in the first few minutes of the second half, I thought so, too, for it was far in advance of any during the first half, and they might easily have taken the lead.

IN ARREARS

A sudden breakaway by the Cobblers saw the Town in arrears, and from that point until eleven minutes from the end it seemed as if Luton would suffer defeat by that one goal. These eleven minutes yielded three goals, of which only one fell to Luton.

This was rather surprising, for the respective defences had been too good for the attacks, and that four goals would be scored was outside the bounds of imagination.

A Payne equaliser put the Luton supporters on excellent terms with themselves, and they cheered to the echo. The cheers had not quite died down when the Cobblers launched another attack, and took the lead again.

I could not swear to it, but I doubt whether a Luton player touched the ball from the time it was in the Cobblers' net until it rested in the back of the net at the other end.

FAINT HOPES

Hopes of another equaliser were faint, and actually it was no surprise when the homesters netted again just before the end.

That, in brief, is the story of a second half, in which the Town promised so much, and accomplished so little. It might be said here that by the irony of fate the wind dropped considerably, and Luton did not gain half the advantage that Northampton had.

That was certainly bad luck, but I cannot truthfully put that forward as an excuse for the defeat. In my view the main reason was that the defence tired in the second half, and could not cope with the lively home forwards.

In the first half they earned full marks, and deserved credit for the way in which they kept their goal intact. In the last half hour, however, the Cobblers seemed to find it easy to weave their way through, and it was a wonder they did not add to their total of goals.

Poor finishing was the main reason; all their inside forwards were weak in front of goal. In approach work they were splendid, but when it came to shooting they were off the mark.

Another reason was the brilliance of Coen in the Town goal. Joe has made a

great come back, and could not be blamed for any of the goals. He made brilliant saves. One in particular, I remember, when Allen burst clean through, and had all the goal to shoot at, but Coen advanced and stopped the shot.

DEFENCE SPREADEAGLED

I cannot pick out any particular player as being responsible for the falling off in defence. All made mistakes, and at times in the second half they were spreadeagled by the long, swinging passes from wing to wing, and were running round in circles.

They had had a gruelling time, certainly, but the positioning and marking was at fault. The Cobblers put on an enormous amount of pressure in the second half, and they seemed to take on a new lease of life after apparently fading out. Actually it was the Town who faded.

It was a thrilling game, played at a cracking pace throughout, and the ball swept from end to end in the quickest possible fashion. Attack, counter-attack; that is how it went in the first half, and both goals had lucky escapes. Either team quite justifiably might have been ahead at the interval, and either would have had cause for grumbling had they been behind.

EASY FOR GOALKEEPERS

Each pressed in turn, but for the amount of attacking that was done the goalkeepers had a remarkably easy time. The attacks usually stopped short before they reached the last line of defence, and this was because of the almost desperate



tackling on both sides. Nelson and Thayne, the centre-halves, were in great form, and the former's first half display was far better than any he has shown since the match at Walsall early in the season.

COBBLERS ON TOP

Then in the second half, when the tide of battle had turned in favour of the Cobblers, goals were much more likely. The Town defence simply could not get the ball out of their goalmouth, and the result was that the forwards were almost entirely unsupported.

There was a great crowd of nearly 19,000, and it is still a mystery to me how they were able to pack in. They had plenty of thrills for their money, for it was the hardest game I have seen this season, and it was played in the real "Derby" spirit. It was no classic, but hard graft throughout, with a few glimpses of brilliant football.

The Cobblers have a better side than they are supposed to have, though I was told by their supporters that they showed form far in advance of any they had shown previously. They found their men better than Luton, and after the interval were quicker on the ball.

Luton were sadly disappointing at times, and some of the football they played was not worthy of the high position they hold. At other times they scintillated, but even then there was still that bug-bear of weakness in front of goal.

GOAL SCORERS NEEDED

It is becoming increasingly evident that there must be some one in the front line, besides Payne, who can be relied upon to score goals. Roberts and Ball certainly had bad luck with two or three efforts, but there was little punch in the line generally.

Wing play was almost negligible, and neither Hodge nor Stevens could get the ball across. I am not blaming Stevens. It was a baptism of fire for the youngster,

and I doubt if he is ready for League football.

He was given little chance, and received few workable passes. Russell, a burly back, played well on top of him, and it was only on rare occasions that he was able to break through. He missed a splendid chance in the opening minutes of the second half, and this must have had an adverse effect on his subsequent play.

I hope he will not be down-hearted, for lack of experience was his main trouble. If pluck counts for anything, he gets full marks, but in these days, what counts most on the football field is results.

STEPHENSON MISSED

Stephenson was missed. There is no doubt about that. No matter how badly he is playing, he is always likely to pull out something brilliant which might lead to a goal, and the forward line is not the same without him.

Hodge is having a lean time, and could do little right on Saturday. It may be said in his favour that he, too, did not receive the right passes, but he centred badly, and could not even place some of his corners accurately.

Ball led the line in grand style in the first half, but was often ploughing a lone furrow, and Payne was frequently not up with him. Ball made great efforts to score, and deserved at least one for his persistence.

He is not as fast as I like to see a centre-forward, but holds the line together.

Payne revealed delightful touches, and got through a tremendous amount of work, but was often lying too far back. His goal was a gem, and he evaded the attentions of his "policemen" cleverly.

Roberts again did any amount of graft, and his approach work was excellent. It did strike me, however, that he did not give Stevens the best of support, but he made great passes to the opposite wing. Fred is quite the unluckiest player I have seen, and just cannot score. He missed by inches two or three times in the first half, and after the interval he headed against the bar.

ALLEN HELD

Nelson held Allen as capably as he did at Luton when the centre-forward was playing for Reading, and his first half display was brilliant. He held up attack after attack, but after the interval there was a falling off in the standard of his play, though he was still too much for Allen.

Finlayson and Fellowes, too, had their best time in the first half, when both did a lot of useful work. After the interval they seemed to be overrun, and were led a merry dance. Finlayson played strongly, but found Tolland a handful, and Fellowes did not show his form of last Saturday.

Mackey and Smith were stalwarts in the first half, and stuck to their guns when things were going badly later. Mackey kept Lyman in subjection, though I thought the winger showed poor form. Smith was opposed to the most dangerous forward on the field, Rawlings, and came out of his tussles very well, though he could not prevent the winger scoring twice. Smith worked tremendously hard, and came to the rescue on two or three occasions when goals seemed imminent.

Mackey was a little bit at sea in the second half, but tackled courageously, and kicked a fair length.

Coen, I have already mentioned: he is making a bold bid to retain his place in the first team.

HOW THE GOALS CAME

After a blank first half, Luton took up the running after the interval, and Roberts hit the bar with a header from Hodge's corner. The Cobblers then attacked, and Riches and Tolland deceived the Town defence to make an opening for RAWLINGS. The winger took the ball on, and cut in to beat Coen with a hard drive from about five yards out. The Town replied, but the Cobblers gradually wore them down, and put on sustained pressure. They missed several chances, and then, eleven minutes from the end, Finlayson received the ball and made a grand pass to PAYNE. The inside man baffled the defence, and beat Gormlie with a great low drive.

Immediately on the re-start, the Cobblers swept down the field, and Allen pushed the ball out to RAWLINGS, who again landed it in the back of the net. Payne nearly repeated his feat in the next minute, but this time his shot was just wide.

Northampton attacked in the closing stages, and a long pass by Rawlings gave LYMAN an opening. He did not hit the ball properly, but the ball was well out of Coen's reach. Luton made last minute efforts to reduce the lead, but these proved