

BRISTOL ROVERS' PLUCKY FIGHT

PAYNE AND BALL SCORE

(By CRUSADER)

LUTON TOWN 2
BRISTOL ROVERS 0

LUTON.—Dolman; Mackey, Smith; Finlayson, Nelson, Fellowes; Hodge, Payne, Ball, Roberts, Stephenson.

BRISTOL ROVERS.—Ellis; Tweed, Preece; Raven, McLean, McArthur; Butterworth, Mills, Hartill, Houghton, Sullivan.

Referee: G. Hamilton-Jones, Woolwich.

WHEN it was all over I had to ask myself what there was to grumble about. That there was much irritation among the supporters is true, but, agreeing that at times the Town seemed unable to do the right thing in any department, does not that happen in most games, and for most teams? Let us give credit to the other fellows for what they can do, and what they are expected to do. Individual lapses are bound to occur, and sometimes the ball will not run right for a player; when there are several players working against the same difficulty that is when play becomes exasperating, and when spectators do not recognise the drawbacks.

SUPERIOR SIDE

There were instances in this game, but is there anyone who will claim that the Town were not much the superior side? If I were asked to state the weaknesses I would say the finishing required improvement, there was need for quicker thinking in the matter of positioning, and a better appreciation of the conditions. The last-named factor also needs driving hard into some of the supporters, and so we may do it straightway.

The going was heavy, but there is a difference between a pitch that is sloppy and the mud slips off the boots easily, and such going as that of Saturday, where the mud was pasty and stuck to the boots. The players stood the pace well, both sides, and it was a tribute to fitness that they kept it up to the end, and were fighting just as spiritedly in the last five minutes as in the first stages.

ABSURD EXPECTATIONS

Many supporters expected something of a repetition of the Easter score against the Rovers, but that was absurd. With better finishing there would have been a much bigger score, certainly, but double figures in League football is not a common experience, and when one examines the League table it must be clear that there is not much prospect of any club reaching double figures this term, unless it happens to be against a team handicapped, as were the Rovers last Easter Monday.

I would hand out the largest measure of praise to the Rovers' defence for their stubborn and rugged defensive work. Now and then McLean and Arthur were inclined to be too robust against Payne, but on the whole the game was clean and sportingly contested. Ellis had heaps more work than Dolman, and perhaps it was well that there was a good understanding between him and his backs.

UNCERTAINTY IN THE REAR

In this respect I thought they were more reliable than the Town's rearguard, where at times there seemed to be uncertainty whether the ball should be allowed to go to Dolman or whether it should be booted anywhere for safety. Occasionally in the first half, and for rather too long a period in the second half, the Rovers were dangerous, but like half a dozen of the teams that have visited Luton, they eventually had to go away empty-handed. It is no mean feat to keep a clean sheet in half-a-dozen matches at home, and with a little better understanding among them the Town defenders can be relied upon, provided there is immediate clearance when danger threatens. That is one point about which I am disposed to haggle. Mackey seldom errs in this respect, but Tom Smith is apt to do so, and Nelson, too, though the latter took few risks against his old colleague, Hartill, but often booted away hard first time.

Still, the Town defence played very well indeed, and I thought both Finlayson and Fellowes gave their forwards plenty of good passes, and co-operated well in the onslaughts on the Rovers' goal. Now and then they failed to get back quickly, but they were responsible for long periods of aggression.

A BETTER BALL

One very pleasing feature of the Town attack was the improvement in Ball's play. He was eager to shoot, and if we can take this as an earnest of his future games, he should be all right. Payne was quite the most assertive forward on view, and was not always lucky with his shooting. He should have had a couple more, but earned most praise. Roberts cannot get rid of the fate which seems to hang on to him in the matter of finishing. Working tremendously hard all the time in mid-field, he was dead out of luck with his

shot. One thing was noticeable in this respect; he did not blaze so high, and on two occasions only the brilliant saves of Ellis prevented him scoring.

Stephenson did not have too good a time, but late in the game made desperate efforts to give of his best, and it was a characteristic effort that paved the way for the second goal. Hodge was not too happy on the going, and when he tried the tricky stuff the crowd likes to see when it is successful, but hates when it isn't, he nearly always failed. He managed to get the ball across very well when he had a go first time.

There will need to be better positioning if the team is to win at Millwall, and this applies to all departments. Often players were waiting for the ball to come to them when it was impossible because opponents were in the way. With these faults attended to the team will be good enough.

ROVERS' RUGGED DEFENCE

I have referred to the strength of the Rovers' defence. They got through an enormous amount of work, and it struck me that they had been well trained for this match. That was confirmed. They had been "speeded" up, and had their plans laid as to the watching of Payne and Stephenson. All the defenders played very well, but the forwards were left very much to themselves, halves and backs being impressed with the importance of keeping their charge intact, and frequently there were eight of the team in their own penalty area.

The most dangerous forward was Butterworth, the right-winger secured from Preston North End the previous evening. He had not been to Bristol, but had travelled from Preston on Saturday morning and joined the Rovers in London. He was speedy and tricky, and rarely wasted a ball. Probably his audacity lent courage to Sullivan in the second half, for he was next best, but the inside forwards were given little chance to draw a bead on Dolman's charge. A year or two ago we should have thought Hartill was a great capture for Luton, but I doubt if anyone would so regard him to-day, yet he was a trier all the time. Nelson held him well, and although Mills and Houghton were very busy at times, they could not make much headway.

SCORING

The Rovers' goal had a lot of escapes before PAYNE smashed in a grand shot after Ellis had raced out to smother an effort by Hodge. This was the only goal before the interval.

BALL scored the second, eleven minutes before the end, after Stephenson had raced right through in brilliant fashion and presented an opportunity, which was taken as promptly as could be desired.

The attendance was 12,784, and receipts £716 16s.

TURF GOSSIP



WOLVERHAMPTON

HIMLEY SELLING HURDLE RACE: **HIKER** is my choice to win from Fossil. WALSALL HANDICAP HURDLE RACE: **COLD BIRD**, and Rhodius next best.

THORNEYCROFT HURDLE RACE: **BRINGHURST LAD**, and Marconi a place.

STANTON SELLING HANDICAP STEEPLECHASE: **JOHN PRITCHARD** to beat Manchester City.

NOVICES' STEEPLECHASE: **LA TOUCHE** or **NO OTHER**, whichever Ivor Anthony saddles, to beat Deslys.

STAFFORDSHIRE HANDICAP STEEPLECHASE: **ERNEST**, with Wild Lancer a place.

Nap: **HIKER**

Double: **HIKER** and **LA TOUCHE** or **NO OTHER**.

SPECIAL SYSTEM SELECTION
GALADALE to win the 2.0 race at Wolverhampton.

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