

WHY CARDIFF CITY'S DEFENCE COLLAPSED

A Word For Luton's Backs

(By CRUSADER)

LUTON TOWN 8
Payne 4 (1 pen.), Stephenson 3,
Dawes.

CARDIFF CITY 1
Prescott

LUTON.—Dolman; Smith, Hubbard;
Finlayson, M'Ginnigle, Fellowes; Hancock,
Dawes, Payne, Roberts, Stephenson.

CARDIFF.—Poland; Mellor, M'Aulay;
Nicholson, J. Smith, Godfrey; Prescott,
Talbot, Melaniphy, Walton, Pugh.

Referee.—D. Gamson, Kidderminster.

In the early stages of the game there were three things that bothered me a good deal. One was the referee, who missed a number of infringements that were infinitely worse than some he espied; another was the manner in which the Luton backs were leaving acres of ground for the opposing wingers; and the third was the tendency of the Town players to keep the ball in the middle where the mud was thickest.

Of the first it may be said that a better recognition of the linesman improved matters, and of the third that the Town began to recognise that it was better to keep the ball where there was turf, so that there was a better foothold, and I am not sure that this had not a great deal more to do with the victory than anything else.

FAULTS OF THE BACKS

Of the second, well, I have hammered at this again and again, and shall continue to do so until the Town's backs adopt the plans of other backs who have been successful against us—playing so close up to the wingers that they have little time to get the ball under control.

On grounds such as that of Saturday we saw both Smith and Hubbard slither on the mud when they were about to take off for a tackle, and the result was that the opponent had the ball under control before a tackle was made, and in such circumstances the odds are always with the man in possession. When the Town backs did play close up they were usually sharp enough to win, but they were too often beaten for my liking.

A DIFFERENT SPIRIT

Having got rid of that phase of anxiety the next thing is to ask why there was such a difference in the Town attack. Some supporters have a disposition to throw all the blame on the slowness of the City backs. Perhaps they were not exactly "even timers" in a sprint, but men of the standard of Mellor and M'Aulay are supposed to have the judgment to repair any lack of speed. If they were slow, so also were the half-backs, and the root of the trouble for Cardiff was the different spirit that animated the Town team—the attack in particular.

Once they were really together, and kept up the rhythmical movements goal-scoring was comparatively easy, and the question to be asked is whether they are going to maintain that quality.

There has never been better punch, determination or such understanding among the Town forwards, and they were able to make full use of the excellent service received from the flank halves, Finlayson and Fellowes, who had a big part in the success.

OTHERS BESIDES SCORERS

It is all very well to go into ecstasies about goal-scorers, but those who make possible the attacks should be remembered quite as much. It is the job of the halves to pave the way for attack as well as foil the opposition, and that is what the Town flank halves did, and the City were overwhelmed because the forwards carried through efficiently the work of the men in support.

There was not the slightest indication in the early play that anything sensational would occur, unless, indeed, it was that the Town would fail in their maintenance of the hundred per cent. for home games.

DEFENDERS INSPIRED FORWARDS

Cardiff started with fine ideas and clever play, and, if anything, were the more dangerous in the first fifteen minutes. Their forwards showed fine speed and determination, shot at the slightest opportunity, and got plenty of power behind the ball. Dolman made one lucky save, although he deserved praise for the manner in which he advanced to cover Prescott's shot. M'Ginnigle won applause several times for his tenacity in Melaniphy, and it was largely the spirit of the defenders that inspired the forwards.

However, from the moment that Stephenson decided that he could hold the ball and beat Mellor at close quarters there was a potency in the Town attack that laid the foundation of success.

Payne was luckily foiled when in characteristic fashion he rushed through and shot from point blank range, the ball being turned aside in a desperate tackle, and Dawes failed to take a grand chance provided by Payne.

TYPICAL PAYNE GOAL

Then Stephenson hugged the ball close and dribbled well through before passing to PAYNE; the latter tricked Smith and slashed home a terrific shot with his left foot—a typical Payne goal.

Pressure increased; Roberts was brought down heavily as he took a shot, then Mellor handled, but the incident was missed by the referee; next Poland made a glorious dive and turned the ball out, and Hancock tore in and banged hard for goal the ball swerving out to the left; again Poland got in the way of a terrific drive by Roberts, and though the ball

spun out of his arms, he grabbed it again; Hancock slammed in another stinger for the goalkeeper to save.

THE STUFF TO GIVE 'EM

This was the stuff the crowd wanted, and it came as a shock when the City got away to equalise. A free kick which should have been given to Luton went to Cardiff, and before the Town defenders had taken position properly the City forwards were through; PRESCOTT dribbled round two or three players including his own men, and then let fly a fine shot which gave Dolman no chance.

Quickly the Town restored the lead. Hancock forced a corner and from the flag-kick M'Aulay handled under the bar. A penalty kick was promptly awarded, and PAYNE rammed in a low drive that gave Poland no chance.

The City defenders were losing their sangfroid, but their forwards were just as eager, and M'Ginnigle came off best in a rousing duel with Melaniphy within three or four yards of the Town goal. Talbot tested Dolman with a fine shot and then Smith headed out when Dolman had no chance to get to the ball following the flag-kick.

DAWES' FIRST

The Town came again, and Payne was fouled; the referee put the ball dead on the penalty line for the free kick. DAWES took the shot and hit the ball hard for goal; Payne jumped up and allowed it to travel direct for goal; Poland had naturally expected a deflection by the centre-forward, and was dismayed to see the ball strike the upright and glance into the net. Poland saved again and again before the interval.

LUTON 3

CARDIFF 1

Conditions were better for the Town forwards in the second half, and they soon made certain of success.

After a brief visit by the visitors to the Town goal, where Walton shot yards too high, the Town came away on the left and Payne tried a first time shot from Stephenson's centre, but the ball skidded out to the right. Again Roberts and STEPHENSON went through, and the latter took the ball close in and whipped it into the net. Before the roar had died down the Town were further ahead. Hancock was tripped by Talbot, and Dawes sent the free kick nicely forward for Payne to take in his stride, and as Poland rushed out to cover the acute angle PAYNE turned the ball past him into the net.

Once more the Town left wing raced through, and this time Poland raced out to cover STEPHENSON, who had dribbled close in, and again the goalkeeper was beaten by a well-directed shot—three goals within six minutes of the restart.

CITY DEBACLE

It became a debacle for the City, for the Town forwards went through the opposition with consummate ease, and shots were driven in almost monotonously.

Poland effected brilliant saves again and again from all the Town forwards, and Dawes and Roberts had hard luck with several shots. Now and then the City forwards made desperate efforts, but they saw little of the ball unless they went right back for it, as they often did.

The seventh goal came from STEPHENSON, who once more dribbled the ball very cleverly past three opponents and then shot past the helpless Poland.

The Town players were toying with the opposition or there would have been more goals, but now and then Poland evoked more applause by his magnificent saves. Hancock had been doing a lot of this close work and losing the ball or allowing the opposition to gather in defence, but he made possible the eighth goal very cleverly. Sprinting hard past M'Aulay he squared the ball perfectly, and PAYNE slammed it into the net.

As time approached the Town slackened further, and yet still managed to keep the visitors' defence hard at work, but in a raid by the visitors Walton missed a good chance by shooting too high. Poland made more saves before the final whistle.

RELENTLESS M'GINNIGLE

At the outset I said enough in criticism of the Town backs; they improved as the game wore on, and kicked well, and Hubbard has now come into the first flight provided he will make closer contact with the opposing wingers. Smith played his customary game, and right or left position makes no apparent difference to him. Dolman had to make a few good saves, and did his part well.

M'Ginnigle played one of those stubborn, relentless stopping games that increases the respect of opponents the longer they have to play, and the lengthy and dour Melaniphy, a very useful leader indeed, must have felt that M'Ginnigle was as tough a leech as he had ever met.

The Town pivot won by a handsome margin the numerous tussles he had with the tall opponent, and he proved that he is as good as ever, and the stronger the opposition the more resolute he becomes.

Finlayson and Fellowes were splendid in their support to the attack, better than they were in defence even, but then to them attack was defence, and none worked harder.

THE RIGHT WING

When I have maintained that Payne was a natural centre-forward others have demurred—this year—but here he was, trustful, strong, always on the spot, able to distribute, and powerful enough to meet shoulder with shoulder. His goals were opportunist touches, and he nearly had thrice the number. Dawes was better

than many onlookers thought, and if one or two of his very fine shots had scored he would have been acclaimed, but he was out of luck with his shooting. Poland making several fine saves from him.

Moreover, Hancock might have done better in the partnership.

I would not run down the old Burnley player. He has pluck, pace and punch, and no little cleverness but I hope in future he will cut out the temptation to dribble across the field in a straight line.

Far better when having tricked one opponent to hit the ball forward to colleagues than to keep on and on across the field, making no effective progress. He did this often, but when he did get on with the move he showed splendid speed and his centres were all that could be wished. I should think he is likely to hold the place now.

AND THE LEFT

Roberts has had his critics, and still has in regard to his markmanship, although he shot well enough in this game, without any luck.

For the general play, the ability to get back and rob opponents, and to initiate telling attacks, well, he was the best player on the field.

With Stephenson showing far more energy than is his wont, in what we call his match-winning mood, this wing gave the best display for many a day, and the only query left is if they will be the same in every match. If the answer is in the affirmative, then we need not worry about Brighton or any other candidate for promotion.

CARDIFF

Poland was the outstanding player of the County. He prevented a record score, and could not be faulted for a single thing. Mellor and M'Aulay had a grim baptism in the Third Division. They were outclassed. The City halves were also unable to hold the Town forwards, but there was much about the City attack that one could like. Their wingers were enterprising, and Talbot was a very fine forward, while Melaniphy is likely to damage a few defensive records if he is allowed much scope.

Attendance was just over 12,000.