

LUTON SHOW UP THE CHAMPIONS

Luton 2, Sunderland 2.

TRY to put yourself in the position of Hodge, the Luton outside right, for a moment in the thirty-fifth minute of the Cup tie with Sunderland.

Hodge was standing six yards from the Sunderland goalkeeper. The ball was sent to him from the left. Offside for a million if he touched it. Rather than interfere with the play, he started to turn away. Good man.

And then—he changed his mind. Made a slow-motion shot. No, not a shot; a trickle. Goalkeeper and forward could see the colour of each other's eyes.

Mapson gathered the ball leisurely and booted it downfield. The referee had not considered Hodge offside!

Note the vital importance of this incident. A goal would have made Luton three up!

The showing up of Sunderland. Those five words describe exactly the experience of the League champions in the first half. They were second best in practically everything. The pitch had a "tablecloth" of snow on the wings; was liberally sanded down the middle. The ball came off the ground at eccentric angles.

Yet Luton played cleverly, effectively. A suspicion of weakness on the right wing; otherwise a jolly good side. They looked the First Division team.

Time and again the Sunderland defence was all abroad; glaringly weak. Time and again the forwards were robbed like so many children. Nelson smothered the centre and inside men. Sunderland had two real shots in forty-five minutes—and one of these was just before half-time.

Payne, the Luton centre, played football. Gallacher and Carter could not approach. A dozen times he made beautiful flicks with a moving ball; he was equally capable in the air. Luton had two goals inside half an hour. They were worth at least one more before the change of ends. A trifle more punch in finishing and they would have reduced Sunderland to rags.

Rain began during the rest. Kept on. The effect was to ease the pitch. In ten minutes or so the going had improved considerably.

It got better every minute. And so did Sunderland—or most of Sunderland. Here was mud. They liked it; made strong attacks. Carter and Gallacher worked the ball; Gurney now and again had Nelson running the wrong way; Connor found his dribbling. This was forward play.

every inch of his great height. For much of the match Gurney could only look long.

The Luton left wing, Roberts and Stephenson, bonny. Yet Payne was the outstanding forward in positional play. Twice in the first half, and once in the second, he was floored heavily. He was not dismayed. Undoubtedly a player of ideas. Sunderland, Johnston especially, were made to realise that.

It was well for them the wing halves found "touch" with the Luton attack and their own forwards in the second half. For the defence looked shaky every time at close quarters. Back play means more than disposing of the loose ball. I do not understand First Division backs being as easily spreadeagled.

When the Sunderland forwards did get together, we saw pretty covering en route to the Luton goal. Why should the Sunderland backs be so open?

Referee: J. H. Whittle (Worcester).

ARTHUR SIMMONS

Thrilling Moment

SUNDERLAND scored. They were in the game. Equalised. Now it was all a fight. Their second goal was a Luton tragedy.

Luton hit back. A shot crashed against Hall. Five minutes to go. Luton all out. They forced two corners. Twice a Sunderland man drove hard out of play.

Last minute. Payne banged the ball a fraction wide. Thousands of spectators yelled "Goal!" I thought it was a goal. A dramatic moment.

The Sunderland players stood "rooted." The stillness of fear.

Earlier this half Payne had cleared everybody but the goalkeeper. He shot too soon.

So Sunderland forced a replay. On the whole game they did not deserve to draw. Of course, conditions were the same for both sides; may I drop in that the rain saved them from a hiding.

Luton gained the lead after twenty-five minutes. Roberts received the ball from the right. Where was the Sunderland defence? Roberts scored. Four minutes later, Roberts again. Where was the Sunderland defence?

Sunderland wanted this goal knocked off. The referee consulted a linesman; pointed to the centre. What I did see before the goal was handling by a Sunderland man. Luton appealed for this, but had the sense to continue playing.

Connor scored Sunderland's first—a beautiful example of economic control and expert finishing. Fourteen minutes. Second in twenty minutes—Duns. Connor rescued the ball almost on the goal-line; hooked it to the middle. Dolman should have caught and cleared. A "sitter." He punched weakly to Duns' feet. a gift.

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A Number One Shock

WELL done, Luton. An occasional faltering by Mackey and Smith after the interval (previously they had scarcely put a foot wrong); a growing weakness of the right wing pair; Hodge lacked the resolution to bring long crosses to a proper conclusion.

But consider the high standing of the opposition. All in all Luton gave Sunderland a number one shock.

Nelson's heading was superb. He used