

Ugly Struggle at Luton :: Many Injuries

PLAYER ORDERED OFF

Lack of Firm Control

SUCCESSFUL PENALTY MAKES ALL THE DIFFERENCE

(By CRUSADER)

LUTON TOWN	3
Payne 2 (1 pen.), Roberts	
NORTHAMPTON TOWN	2
Fellowes (o.g.), Tolland	

LUTON TOWN. — Dolman; Mackey, Smith; Finlayson, Nelson, Fellowes; Hancock, Dawes, Payne, Roberts, Parris.

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

Referee.—A. W. Smith, Birmingham.

Surely it is quite a decade since we saw a struggle comparable with this.

What was wrong with anybody and everybody?

Crowd clamouring for salutary measures against this or that player; referee rushing hither and thither, whistle rarely a moment's respite; players felled to the ground without ceremony; wrangling between players, and arguments between the official and players.

Obvious it was to everybody that a full ninety minutes of the bickering and bashing without some effort to clean the game was impossible.

One would have thought that matters had reached a climax when the players were called together and addressed plainly, but it was not so. Result: One of the least conspicuous of the offenders ordered from the field.

We have had so much clean football at Luton that the violent change came as something of a shock. The pity of it was that the contestants were neighbours.

I am not going to say that all Northampton were demons and all Luton were saints. Not at all. What I will say, however, is that if the referee had taken the names of one or two players, perhaps one only, of Northampton, it might have been sufficient, before play had been in progress, quarter of an hour, to have insured a very different game.

WHY?

To what can one attribute the state of things?

In my view, Northampton had prepared for a desperate fight; they had laid themselves out to hold up the home team somehow, and to throw them out of gear. Two early goals completely wrecked their plans, and as the match grew older, and the referee, in spite of frequent admonitions to players of both sides, was ignored by the majority of the players, so the game became a discredit.

WHEN ALL WERE PLEASED

As one of the crowd, I am sure we were glad when it was all over: officials of both sides certainly were, and there could not be any doubt that the man in charge was ready for a change of garb just as much as the players.

Neither the heavy going, nor the circumstances of the match justified the tactics that were employed. Possibly the referee made a big mistake of thinking that because it was bound to be a needle game he must make generous allowances for loss of temper.

There is something to be said for that too, but many of the infringements were not the result of loss of temper; they were done deliberately and in cold blood. It was on such occasions that I think the referee was lacking in decision.

Whether there will be anything more heard of the matter I know not, but it will assuredly be expected in some quarters.

Quite early there were indications of rough play, and Tolland was admonished for a foul on Nelson, but there had been fouls previously. Gormlie had saved two or three shots, and the Cobblers had been forced to defend somewhat strenuously.

GOALS

Seven minutes had elapsed when Finlayson suddenly lifted the ball in front of goal; up bobbed PAYNE, and his head connected just right, the ball flying into the net out of Gormlie's reach.

The cheering had hardly died down when there was a corner on the Town side. Parris's flag-kick came awkwardly for Gormlie, but he managed, by a great effort, to knock the ball out; ROBERTS was at hand and promptly headed the ball back, and, although Gormlie dived and managed to arrest the ball, it was well over the line, and, fortunately for Luton, the referee was standing close to the upright and saw the goal.

ROUGHNESS DEVELOPED

Roughness developed rapidly then, and the referee spoke to player after player.

From then on, Northampton were kept mainly on the defensive, but there was danger in their raids. Gormlie made a magnificent save from Hancock, and Roberts and Fellowes went very close with fine shots. Parris once should have scored, but his shot struck Gormlie, and was deflected.

Mackey was badly hurt in stemming an attack by the visitors, and this was a severe blow for Luton, as the full-back had to move to outside-right for the rest of the game. He could not raise a walk. Northampton played up strongly, and gave much trouble, especially Lyman, but Finlayson stuck to him gamely, and was very useful indeed by reason of his tenacity. Dawes, who had dropped to

half-back, also got through a lot of work.

There were close shaves for Northampton when Payne got through. Once he got the mastery of Thayne after a grim tussle, and it looked as though he must score, but his final shot travelled a foot wide. Roberts also was well on the mark with his shooting, and one storming shot was only inches too high.

FELLOWES' MISHAP

With a minute to go before the interval, Lyman made a brilliant solo effort, dribbling right through the defence and coming down the goal-line with the ball; he turned it in front of goal; there was no colleague of his there to meet it, but FELLOWES running back, tried to kick the ball away from the goal; instead it went hard into the net. Half-time:

LUTON TOWN	2
NORTHAMPTON TOWN	1

Almost immediately the game was restarted, Tolland was severely spoken to by the referee following a clash with Hancock. A free kick was given.

The home team were playing with but a shadow of the confidence they should have had, and it was this lack of fire and alertness that enabled the visitors to equalise.

ALL SQUARE

Six minutes after the resumption the Northampton right wing made play, and after bright short passing, TOLLAND suddenly shot for goal. Dolman was completely beaten, and the scores were level. This was a really fine goal.

Luton came back with a fierce assault, and during a hot struggle in the goal-mouth Gormlie was beaten, but Thayne had wisely fallen back, and booted the ball clear. At the other end Lauderdale drove in a fine shot which Dolman saved at full length.

Persevering, the Town left wing had a turn, and Parris was dribbling through when Russell used his arms to hold up the winger, and the referee promptly awarded a penalty kick. Before it could be taken one of the visitors drove the ball straight at Hancock and laid him out. The referee's attention was called to the incident by a linesman, but no action was taken.

PAYNE'S PENALTY

When the ball was placed on the spot by the referee, Tolland went up to interfere with it, and the referee had to persuade him to go away. It was some time before the kick could be taken, but when it was, PAYNE beat Gormlie easily with a terrific low shot.

Matters became worse after this, and there was a clash in midfield in which Nelson and Lauderdale were concerned, and the former had his stocking slit and his leg gashed, while Lauderdale was rolling about the ground in pain.

When the "doctors" had attended to the injured players, the referee called the two armies together in midfield and spoke to them earnestly.

Northampton attacked, and Lauderdale was dribbling through when Nelson blocked the ball as the shot was taken; Lauderdale rolled over, and the referee awarded a penalty kick. Lauderdale was soon up again. Tolland, after attempting a display of jugglery with the ball, took the penalty kick. He shot a yard wide.

THAYNE SUFFERS

Then came the order for Thayne to leave the field. Roberts had dribbled well through and was near the goal line when brought down by Thayne. It was an infringement, but certainly not vicious.

At once, however, Thayne was ordered off the field. He left amid a storm of cheers and boos, but it seemed as though the sympathy was with him, and the dissatisfaction with the decision.

The closing stages were comparatively tame. Too late the referee had asserted his full power, and although there were one or two good moves from either side the end came with the Town just deserving their success.

CAUSE FOR SHAME

One is tempted to say that players of either team had cause for shame, but with the final whistle they all seemed to be more friendly than they were when they started.

Dolman kept goal well. He had less work than Gormlie, but I thought he might have made a better effort to prevent the second goal.

Mackey was playing well when injured, but his deputy, Finlayson, also put up a grand game, and was one of the few players who did not come under the official ban. Smith stuck to his job splendidly; he was guilty of one bad foul early on, but for the rest of the game played strong and reliable football.

A TOUGH JOB

Fellowes worked hard as ever, and did much sound attacking work, but was unfortunate to score against his own side. Nelson had a very tough job indeed. Allen could make nothing of him, but Lauderdale and Tolland were difficult propositions, and it was here there was most trouble. The Town pivot took a lot before he began to use his weight. Parris seemed rather lost during the tumult. He had to work on his own a great deal, but now and then he and Roberts showed neat understanding and gave much bother to the Northampton defence.

Payne was in the wars very quickly, and it did not appear as though his leg was quite sound, but as usual he figured among the goal scorers, and had lively duels with Thayne, but they were invariably of a sporting character.

For both Dawes and Hancock I had the greatest admiration. If ever two players kept their heads these did, and they contrived to do a lot of grand work. Dawes took the half-back position when Mackey was hurt, and Hancock went inside. They used the ball to good purpose, though the latter was prone to over-dribble at

times. Nevertheless, I reckoned him one of the best three players on the field.

THE VISITORS

Gormlie was a sound custodian, and Russell and Little were vigilant backs. Moreover, they kicked and tackled cleanly, and were rarely in trouble with the referee. That Russell fouled Parris is true, but it was a gentle sort of affair. All that could be said against him was that he unfairly used his arms against the Luton player.

Riches and Simpson were clever halves, and Thayne played his customary robust game. Thayne suffered dismissal for the faults of others of his side, and that was why he had the sympathy of all of us. The fact that all the players had been cautioned was probably the decisive factor, for in ordinary circumstances a player would hardly be sent off the field for an unorthodox tackle.

Lyman was the most dangerous of the visiting forwards, if not the cleverest. The latter compliment was won by Tolland, and Lauderdale was nearly as good, but why these two players should sacrifice cleverness to tactics of another kind is beyond comprehension. Tolland I rate as one of the cleverest forwards in the Southern Section, and neither he nor Lauderdale need have played quite as they did.

Allen worked manfully, but once again met his master in Nelson, and apart from the scoring shot by Tolland, the Northampton inside forwards rarely looked like getting goals.

The attendance was 19,196, and the receipts £1,160 16s. 6d. Such a crowd deserved something better than they saw, and we can hope for even greater crowds than this before the season ends, but we shall want referees who will firmly demand football of the best type.

BIRTHDAY GREETINGS to Jack Nelson, Luton Town's captain and centre-half, and to Billy Fellowes, Luton Town's left half.