

REFEREES REQUIRE VIRTUES OTHER THAN PATIENCE

Why Luton Game Was Spoilt

QUESTION OF AN INQUIRY

IF I were to ask the name of the least popular man on the Town ground last Saturday I might reasonably expect to receive the name of the referee. He had few friends among the twenty thousand spectators, and there was wholesale criticism of him as the crowd left the ground.

Reason for the answer would be that he failed to assert the authority which is his from the moment he enters the field of play.

With that I am bound to agree up to a point, and yet I felt rather sorry for him.

Many years have passed since I heard a crowd so vehemently and so persistently demanding salutary action from an official, and if ever such a demand was justified it was in this game.

Yet, what happened when he took such action and sent our old player Billy Thayne from the field? There was a terrific howl against him.

What is a referee to do? What would have happened had he sent off a Luton player?

I hardly dare think, and yet there were a score of worse offences than that of which Thayne was guilty. Much though I like Billy for his wholeheartedness and his transparent frankness he committed an offence. Almost certainly he would not have been sent off the field but for the general caution that had been administered to all the players, nor would he have received more than a reprimand in an ordinary game.

NO ORDINARY GAME

THIS, however, was no ordinary game; with two exceptions it was the worst I have seen at Luton since the War.

Two Northampton players were the chief culprits. They had so flagrantly flouted the referee and the laws of the game in general that it became obvious reprisals would ensue, and for that certain Luton players could be blamed.

Mr. Smith, the referee, was blame-worthy in that he allowed patience to interfere with his discretion. Patience is supposed to be a virtue, but there are greater virtues for a referee.

A NEEDLE GAME

IMAGINE that Mr. Smith took the field with the idea that this was bound to be a needle game, and that allowances must be made for excess of exuberance. Many of us would probably feel the same in similar circumstances. We should be just as much in error as was the official.

I am perfectly certain that in any future game Mr. Smith will not allow his patience to be so severely taxed or his authority to be so patently challenged.

We are not supposed to advise referees what they should do, but I am of opinion that had Mr. Smith produced his notebook and entered one name in particular a few minutes after the start we might well have had a very different experience.

Infringements were allowed to pass with the barest penalties provided for in the laws, whereas what was actually needed was a Draconian hand even if it meant the reduction of the number of gladiators before half-time.

REVERSED

WHAT did the referee think of the crowd?

I know not, but he was mistaken if he thought that people were nagging him for wrong decisions; what they wanted was an official who would insist on the clean and wholesome football to which we have become accustomed.

It would be unfair to tar all the players with one brush.

Two players should have been sternly dealt with early in the struggle, one in particular, without reference to the number of fouls of which he was guilty.

For his obvious disregard and contempt of the official he should have been ordered to the dressing-room.

It is just as much an offence to argue with a half-smile and an air of injured innocence as to make vigorous protest. We saw this not once, but a dozen times from one individual.

WHAT A MANAGER SAID

LESS than twenty-four hours after the game I was speaking with a well-known manager of a London club, and he remarked on the rough game that had taken place at Luton.

First there was the impudent interference with the penalty-kick.

One player, after the ball had been placed, banged it hard into the stomach of an opponent.

This happened right in view of a linesman, but there was no action against the player.

True a penalty-kick had been awarded, and a second could not be given before the first was taken, but there is an important law that deals with ungentlemanly conduct.

Then there was the attempted interference with the ball after the referee himself had placed it on the penalty spot.

More even than the succession of fouls this deliberate flouting of the referee struck me as meriting drastic punishment, and how Mr. Smith stood it I do not know.

OTHER SIDELIGHTS

THERE are other side-lights on the game and what followed, but of those I do not propose to say anything.

I am all for a man, yes, even a referee, having a chance to rehabilitate himself, and I dare wager that in future Mr. Smith will never allow players to take such liberties.

MAY BE AN INQUIRY

YOU may have read something about joint action by the Luton and the Northampton Clubs.

A message from Northampton on Monday morning asked me for certain information, and led me to the view that Northampton will exercise their right for a personal hearing when Thayne's case is considered by the F.A. Disciplinary Committee.

DISCIPLINARY COMMITTEE

The onus is upon Northampton, of course, but when the referee's report is considered both clubs will be asked for their observations.

It is the duty of every club to furnish to the League a report of the conduct of each game, and this has been done.

We cannot infer joint action from

what occurred after the game. What we can infer is that the clubs may be agreed on the report they will send to the League.

SAW THE REFEREE

IN this connection I happen to know that Alderman Jeyes, the chairman of the Town club, the chairman of the Northampton club, and the referee were in conference after the game.

What transpired can only be conjectured, but I should imagine, that from a sense of fairness, Alderman Jeyes acquainted the referee with the opinion of the club, and with the nature of the report to be submitted.

It is this characteristic frankness of Alderman Jeyes that has counted for so much in recent seasons with the "big guns" of the League.

IMPROVED PROSPECTS

WITH Brighton, Millwall, Watford, Reading and Gillingham going under there was a little brightening of the Town's prospects for promotion. We cannot say much about Notts County's luck in winning by the odd goal against Swindon in the last minute of the match.

Remember that we beat Northampton by a penalty goal, and that they failed to score from a penalty kick.

What we want is to see our lads make sure of their home games and to gather a few points away, and if they can bring back two points from Bristol Rovers on Saturday they will do well.

WHAT THEY WANT

THEY should manage it. They will have a bigger ground, and they all prefer it. They have taken a lot of points from Eastville, and have not been beaten there in the last four seasons.

Here is the summary of games between the clubs in the Football League:

	P	W	L	D	F	A	P
At Luton		17	11	2	4	44	12 26
At Bristol		16	3	4	9	19	29 15

Total 33 14 6 13 63 41 41

Results at Bristol have been:

	F	A		F	A
1920-21	.. 0	5	1928-29	.. 1	1
1921-22	.. 0	2	1929-30	.. 2	2
1922-23	.. 1	1	1930-31	.. 1	5
1923-24	.. 1	1	1931-32	.. 1	3
1924-25	.. 2	2	1932-33	.. 0	0
1925-26	.. 2	2	1933-34	.. 1	0
1926-27	.. 2	1	1934-35	.. 1	1
1927-28	.. 2	1	1935-36	.. 2	2

I do not know offhand any club that has such a record of draws on one ground away from home as have the Town at Bristol.

NO MEAN SIDE

THE Rovers are no mean proposition at home. They either win handsomely or they lose, apparently.

Notts County, Gillingham, Southend and Watford have all won at Eastville, and draws have been made by Newport and Queen's Park Rangers.

Six weeks ago Watford won by the only goal of the match, and the Town will have to make up their minds they are going to improve on Watford's performance.

THE BIG DANGER

THE big danger man of the Rovers' attack appears to be Butterworth, the right winger, who played his first match for them at Luton, and we all thought they had made a first-class capture. He is a player who will require a strong curb.

Hartill, the old Wolverhampton centre-forward, is also doing well again, and is likely to be a trouble, but Nelson held him pretty well at Luton.

The Rovers were well beaten at Walsall last Saturday, and on comparative form the Town should bag the spoils. Their outlook will be bright indeed if they manage it.

Before we see them at home again they will have played two games away, for on Good Friday morning they will be at Lea Bridge to tackle the Orient. Four points from these games would be a tremendous lift-up.

KUDOS FOR RESERVES

THE TOWN RESERVES put up a grand show at Craven Cottage, and fully deserved their point. Considering that they were meeting a very strong Fulham side the performance was as good as anything they have done this season.

Most pleased was I to hear that young Childs and Lutterloch played so well, particularly the latter. If he is allowed to develop here I am sure he is going to become a reliable defender.

This result was an appetiser for the big game on the Town ground on Saturday, and there should be the best gate for a reserve game that we have had this season.

ARSENAL RESERVES' VISIT

THE ARSENAL RESERVES are due, and it will be a handsome feather in Luton's hat if the Town can repeat last season's victory, which was only the third success over the Arsenal Reserves during ten seasons.

There is something else to avenge, too, for at Highbury two or three months ago the Arsenal ran up a score of ten goals to nil.

What are the Reserves going to do about that?

The ten games between the teams at Luton have resulted in the Town winning three and drawing three, and the Arsenal have won four.

In their last away game the Arsenal were at Charlton, where they went under by three goals clear. We should like to see our Reserves equal Charlton's performance.

THE NEW FORWARD

GEORGE COX is likely to prove a very useful addition to the Town's complement of players.

Cox is young, strong, capable as a footballer, and a very fine marksman. Trained in the Arsenal School, he was allowed to go to Fulham at a big fee at the beginning of the season, and has cost the Town a fairly substantial sum.

Cox is a first-class cricketer, and plays for Sussex, and no doubt arrangements have been made for him to follow the summer pastime.

At Luton a fortnight ago he scored four goals, and last Saturday he was a big trouble to Hughie McGinnigle, and Hughie can hold all the clever men almost as well as any pivot to-day.

Cox—I have this on the best authority—is a very steady, well-conducted young fellow in every way, and I hope he proves as good as Joe Payne.

THE VACANT DIRECTORSHIP

ON Wednesday the annual meeting of shareholders of Luton Town will be held, and the question of a successor to the late Mr. E. Mouse will be considered.

I was right in saying that the Board would put forward a proposal to keep the number at seven, though whether I should have mentioned it is another matter.

It did bring a message from Mr. Harry Richardson who, I stated, was a probable candidate, and Mr. Stewart Wilkinson a certain starter.

"If the shareholders decide to bring the number down to seven," says Mr. Harry Richardson, "I shall not stand because I am not going to oppose Mr. Percy Mitchell, the retiring director."

"If they decide to fill the vacancy however, I shall let my name go forward."

Mr. Stewart Wilkinson is likely to stand, in any event, and so there will in all probability be an election.

USED TO SCOUTING

ALDERMAN CHARLES JEYES does other "spotting" besides that of football players. As a member of the trust of Chapel-street (Luton) Methodist Circuit he is concerned with the engagement of ministers for the Circuit and this involves long journeys occasionally.

At half-past six on Sunday morning, accompanied by Mr. and Mrs. Morton Goodrich, of Harpenden, and Mr. P. Hawkins, of the Beech-hill Methodist Church, Alderman Jeyes began a motor journey to Shrewsbury, but when they reached Stony Stratford, they found the weather conditions very bad indeed. There had been much heavier snow than at Luton.

They decided to go on, but before they reached Daventry conditions were such that it was deemed prudent to turn back, and they got home again about nine o'clock for they could hardly have expected to get back home again on Sunday had they continued on their way.

A LONG DISTANCE YARN

HERE is how Archie Wickson knew about the penalty taken by Joe Payne on Saturday.

Archie was at the 'phone receiving the half-time results from London, when the speaker at the other end of the wire said: "Wait a moment, your team is just taking a penalty kick!"

There was no need for the man to inform Archie that Joe had been successful: he heard the noise.

CORRESPONDENCE

A KENSWORTH COMMENT

Dear Crusader,—So much space has already been given to the Luton-Northampton match that further comment seems unnecessary. Anyhow, these glowing reports of fights (of which there were none), kicking, etc., have done nothing to place the onus for the best part of these unpleasant incidents upon the right shoulders.

No one will dispute your contention that Northampton began this game with the full intention of holding up the Town, but is it not always the case for any team to do their utmost to topple the top-notchers?

Such is fame, especially so where near neighbours are concerned, but I venture to say that had Referee Smith acted his part as we expected, half these incidents would never have occurred. Here we had the spectacle of a referee blowing his whistle each time two players connected, and before the free kick was taken rushing to lecture the player, and in most cases both.

That he had obvious opportunities to give one or two players marching orders was nothing to his credit that he did not do so.

His demonstrations of gallery show in

(Continued in next column)