

Payne and Stephenson the Marksmen

ORIENT'S FIRST HOME DEFEAT SINCE AUGUST 31

(By CHILTERN)

LUTON TOWN 2
Payne Stephenson.

CLAPTON ORIENT 0

CLAPTON ORIENT.—Hillam; Searle, Hearty; Taylor (H.), Affleck, Heinemann; McCombe, Fletcher, Crawford, Smith (H.), Farrell.

LUTON TOWN.—Coen; King, Smith; Finlayson, Nelson, Fellowes; Parris, Dawes, Payne, Roberts, Stephenson. Referee.—L. E. Gibbs, Reading.

LUTON TOWN began their holiday programme in the most encouraging manner possible, when they took the points from CLAPTON ORIENT at Lea Bridge yesterday, and, incidentally, became the first team to win there since August 31, when Cardiff were successful.

For the first time for months the players had a light ball, and found it strange after the leaden balls and water-logged grounds of the last few weeks.

Control was most difficult, especially as the ground was bumpy, and, consequently the standard of football was not quite as high as was anticipated. Throws-in were frequent, but, nevertheless, the exchanges were always interesting, and savoured something of the Cup-tie atmosphere.

GAME FIGHTERS

The Orient were game fighters, and never gave in, though Luton were always the masters after the interval. In the first half, the home side had the advantage of the strong wind and the slope, and had more of the play.

The wind was a decided handicap, and often it blew the Town's clearances back into the goal. It played tricks with every high ball, and since much of the play was contested in the air, some peculiar things happened.

Luton began brightly, and Parris made a grand shot that was well saved by Hillam. Roberts and Stephenson carved out the opening. The Orient replied, and with the ball bouncing awkwardly away from Nelson, Fletcher was presented with a chance, but hit the side net.

OVER THE BAR

Stephenson then looked a certain scorer following a long kick by Tom Smith, but after he had failed to get in his shot, he gained possession again, only to drive narrowly over. Then began a spell of Orient pressure, for the home-sters were evidently bent on making the best possible use of their luck in winning the toss. Farrell made one flying header that would have counted as a goal had he not got inches too much angle on it.

A centre from McCombe brought a dangerous situation, which was saved by Coen going full length to save.

Weak finishing was spoiling the home side's efforts, and they had a spell of negative pressure. The Town found relief on the right, where Dawes took a through pass from Parris to centre, and Hillam scraped the ball away as Payne crashed through.

Play continued to favour the Orient, but Coen was not overworked, and the defence worked like heroes. They kept the home forwards away from shooting distance, and their tackling was quick and clean.

COEN'S PENALTY SAVE

After 32 minutes, misfortune befell the Town in the shape of a penalty awarded against Fellowes for hands. The ball bounced very high, and struck him as he went to trap it. The referee was in a good position, and gave the kick, though the decision was a trifle harsh.

However, it ended happily enough for the Town, for Searle made a weak effort with the kick. He tapped it well away from Coen but it had not the pace to beat the goalkeeper, who saved at full length.

The Town made headway after this, and Payne and Stephenson contrived to make an opening for Parris, who made a great shot that passed just wide of the upright. Right on the interval Roberts made a magnificent through pass to Payne, who was cleverly robbed by Affleck.

Having held their own in the first half, it was natural to expect the Town to shine with the aid of the wind, for this was undoubtedly the big factor in the game. All the Town supporters were optimistic as to the result, but it might have been different had the Orient once taken the lead which would have given them added confidence.

PAYNE'S INDICATION

On the run of the play, they should have been ahead at half-time, but grand defensive work and weak shooting brought their effort to nought.

Payne gave an early indication of what to expect when he broke through in characteristic style, and was only inches short when Hillam ran out to clear.

Stephenson next lobbed the ball over the bar after a poor kick by Searle, and then the Town goal was lucky to escape downfall. Fletcher, who was the Orient's most consistent forward, weaved his way through, but Coen saved from point blank range.

The ball went to McCombe, who had all the goal to shoot at, but only managed to hit Smith, who was lying on the ground. Coen was still at full length, and Nelson kicked away.

LUTON LEAD

The next Luton attack brought a goal, and it came after 55 minutes. PAYNE was the scorer, and he rammed the ball through from a few yards' range. It followed a scramble in the goalmouth, and Hillam had previously saved from Stephenson. Payne burst through in his own inimitable style, and made no mistake.

After this, the Town were always masters of the situation, though Clapton were always pegging away. However, their finishing was still poor, and the Town

defence was playing on top of its form. Coen once had a hot handful from Farrell, and then Payne gave Dawes a chance, only to see the inside man hit the checked another advance, and fed Stephenson, from whose pass Roberts shot over.

Parris came into the picture with a neat run and a curling centre that Hillam punched over as he fell into the net, where he was followed by Payne. Parris was badly fouled on the edge of the penalty area, and Dawes made a poor attempt with the kick. Parris had to go off for repairs, but soon resumed.

STEPHENSON'S BRILLIANT EFFORT

Luton were doing most of the attacking now, and they were better together than their opponents. Payne headed wide, and then STEPHENSON, who had been rather quiet up to this point, pulled out some of that brilliance of which he is capable. He received a lovely pass from Roberts, and, moving inside, beat Searle and Taylor by delightful footwork before driving the ball low into the far corner of the net just out of Hillam's reach.

This goal came 15 minutes from the end, and definitely decided the Orient's fate, though they had never really threatened to win an equaliser.

Roberts made a shot on the half-turn, which Hillam dealt with capably, and then Crawford had his last chance, but muffed it badly.

It was a fine victory, for the Orient are never easy to overcome at Lea Bridge. The Town showed a decided improvement on their Bristol form, though they were evidently troubled by the lightness of the ball.

FINE DEFENCE

I had no fault to find with the defence, and it was good to see them keeping a clean sheet. Nelson was the big man, and he blocked the path down the middle so effectively that Crawford was rarely seen. With the ball constantly in the air, Nelson was able to use his weight to great advantage, and to the almost complete discomfiture of Crawford.

King and Smith were a reliable pair of backs, with the former confirming the good impression he made at Bristol. He was a little uncertain in his kicking in the first half, but gave nothing away. Smith played a sterling game, and was especially prominent in the second half, when he gave McCombe no room at all.

COEN'S SUCCESS

Coen made an auspicious return to the team, for apart from saving the penalty he effected several splendid clearances, and had every reason to be satisfied with the match. Finlayson and Fellowes, playing against former clubmates, were always on top of their jobs, and the former showed that he could work the ball better than any half-back on the field.

Both were tenacious in their tackling, and rugged. Fellowes was inclined to overkick at times, but much of this was attributable to the lightness of the ball.