

Reflections on the Gillingham Game

CHALLENGING TEAM RECONSTRUCTED

Well, Luton Town passed safely over another awkward obstacle last night, and came to closer grips with Notts County.

They deserved to do so, for they had to face a grim and resolute lot of fellows who were out with a fixed motive that Luton would have to pull out something extra to win through.

Football would have been better but for the sticky ground. That was a handicap to Luton rather than to Gillingham because the visitors had framed their team in such a way that the worse the conditions the more advantage to them.

Did you notice the changes that had been made in the constitution of the Gillingham side. These changes were evidently not due merely to dissatisfaction with the play of the team against the Orient last Saturday.

GILLINGHAM'S MANAGER

AFTER the game I had a word with Fred Maven, the manager of Gillingham, a curious sort of chap. It is not often he is seen to smile, but he was grinning broadly this time, and he almost guffawed when I told him that he had sprung one on Luton.

I told him that he had arranged his team with a view to giving the Town a vigorous game, and when he said softly, "Oh, I don't know," I just pointed out that it was not a common occurrence for a full back to be given a centre forward position, and two centre forwards to be given the extreme wing positions.

THE RATTLERS

THAT to me could only be summed up as an effort to bring into the attack such fire and dash that would rattle the opposing defence. Well, these fellows in unusual places did not only show plenty of spirit; they also played very good football, and we certainly were fortunate not to see more goals conceded, although in saying that one must also have full regard to the numerous escapes of the Gillingham goal.

We must not take it hard that every team we meet tries to pull out something extra; that is the penalty of fame always. Every team fighting for promotion has like experience, as Notts County would well agree after their visit to Newport.

DESERVED TO WIN

SUGGESTIONS that we were a bit lucky to win, however, were rather wide of the mark. If, as I heard one individual say, Gillingham should have had four goals, how many should we have had if similar escapes at the other end were reckoned as goals? Of course, none can tell us that.

There was an excess of vigour at times, but there was nothing vicious, except on one occasion when one of the visitors tried to kick a Town player simply because he was tricked. The referee missed a lot of fouls of a petty character, and he whistled frequently when there was a legitimate charge, but on the whole he held the players in hand, and that was what we required.

NOT COPY-BOOK FOOTBALL

IF I say that the Town did not play like a true promotion side it is because they were not allowed to do so. They wanted to play copy-book football, and it did not come off against the ruthless tackling and hard kicking tactics of the visitors.

The Town forward line never worked smoothly at all, but happily Payne and Stephenson were in grand form, although the latter was out of luck with his shooting. Roberts did not have such a good match as usual, and Dawes appears to lack confidence.

I am sure he is a far better player than he has shown us yet, and I am itching for the day when we shall see something of his old Palace form. The broken jaw business at the beginning of the season appears to have sapped some of his spirit, and the sooner he forgets it the better for all of us.

HANCOCK'S IMPROVEMENT

I WAS pleased to see Teddy Hancock do well. Whole-hearted, apt to dribble at times, in this game he did the right thing as often as any player, and he opened out the game splendidly just when it was needed. There were one or two movements between him and Dawes that deserved better results, and I am not sure that this combination is not as good as any we have, though personally my man would be Frank Sloan as a wise head for a tight corner, and we were in tight corners more than once last night.

DEFENDERS

FINLAYSON and Fellowes were grand, and so was Nelson, although the skipper now and then took a few risks when he should have clouted the ball, for the visitors were ball-hungry and were always striving for it.

Now and then Smith was reckless at back, and I think that both he and King again left too wide a space for the wingers to cover. That is one of the reasons our goals against column is not too pleasing.

None has greater admiration for the Corinthian enthusiasm of Smith, and last night he made dashing clearances in contrast to the skilful interceptions

JOE PAYNE Has Created a New Individual Goal Scoring Record for Luton Town. His Four Goals Against Gillingham Last Night Brought His Total to 45.

Previous Best was 43 by Andy Rennie in 1928-29.

of King. They are a well balanced pair, but I do wish they would copy the methods of those full backs who seldom stray far from the opposing wingers.

Coen made no mistake, and brought off some brilliant saves. That he will keep his place on this form seems absolutely certain. Such is the luck of the game for Dolman.

MANAGERS AT THE MATCH

SEVERAL clubs were represented at the match. In addition to Mr. Harold Wightman, there was Mr. Angus Seed, who nearly became manager, and is now in charge at Barnsley.

Others I caught sight of were Messrs. W. Birrell, Queen's Park Rangers; Jack Foster, Huddersfield; George Stephenson, Charlton; and Neil McBain, Watford.

I understand that Birmingham were also represented.

FOUR BEHIND HARSTON

THE gate was excellent, considering the earliness of the kick-off.

Thirteen thousand and twenty-eight paid for admission, and most Third Division clubs would be more than pleased if they had a gate of this dimension on a Saturday.

They saw Payne again score four goals, and thus bring his total for the season to 45, four behind Harston, the Mansfield centre-forward.

This latest performance must have enhanced his chances of an England cap.

RE-ELECTIONS

AT the meeting of the Directors yesterday, Alderman Charles Jeyes was re-elected.