

Why Luton Town Lost At Home

DID THE REFEREE ERR IN OFFSIDE DECISION?

(By CRUSADER)

BURY 1
Bargh
LUTON TOWN 0

LUTON.—Dolman; Mackey, Smith; Loughran, Nelson, Fellowes; Griffiths, Payne, Redfern, Hogg, Stephenson.

BURY.—Ferguson; Bell, Gemmell; Jones, Matthewson, Whitfield; Rayner, Bargh, Smith (F), Graham, Ormandy. Referee: G. Dutton, Warwick.

Who made the biggest blunder in this game?

Many of you will say it was Dolman when Bury won the match. Others will declare that it was Redfern when he failed to shoot promptly and accurately on two or three occasions; and some will also blame Griffiths for similar failing.

To my way of thinking the biggest individual blunder was made by Referee Dutton, but before I give the reason for so thinking let me say at once that I do not blame him for the defeat of Luton.

When Payne's smashing shot hit the bar and rebounded to Redfern, why was there an offside decision? So far as we could see there was no other reason at all for the decision except offside.

No doubt quite a number of people felt that Redfern was offside because the ball came back to him from the bar.

Such an idea is quite erroneous, and the authorities are very insistent upon this.

If Redfern was offside when he played the ball he was offside when the kick was taken, and as soon as he moved a step forward he should have been penalised, but he was not offside then; actually he rushed from the crowd of players and it was not until he had scored that the whistle went for offside.

All the Town players on the spot were behind the ball during—the brief scuffle—and therefore must have been onside.

REFEREE'S DECISION

In order that there should be no doubt about the matter and to do justice to the official I made inquiries as to whether Redfern or any of the other players had handled, and was assured that they had not, and was further assured that in reply to one of the Town players the referee said his decision was that Redfern was offside. It seemed to me also that there was a momentary mix-up in which the goalkeeper touched the ball before Redfern netted.

My contention, therefore, is that the referee made an elementary blunder.

The Referees' Chart says:

The point to notice is not where a player is when he receives the ball, but where he was at the moment it was played by a player of the same side.

It is quite true that the Chart also points out that "the ball hitting the goalpost or bar and rebounding does not put a player onside who was offside when the ball was last played.

It is equally obvious, therefore, that the ball rebounding from the bar does not put a player offside.

Had that goal been allowed, however, there might have been an entirely different complexion put on the game; might have been, but just as well there might not have been, for the Town attack was sadly inept against the Bury defence.

Possibly the referee has an entirely different construction of the incident, but I have written as I, and others close to the spot, saw it.

REDFERN'S PLAY

I should think that there will be no further question as to the occupant of the centre-forward position. Redfern's display in his first game was good enough to win the applause of everybody, but then he was at inside-right; in this game he lacked the fire and dash that is so essential to-day against the hefty and stubborn defences that are met. Payne has that enthusiasm, and I think Redfern would be far better at inside-right, where he would have more scope for that neat footwork, although he does need a good deal of speeding-up.

Payne was the one forward that appeared likely to cause mischief for the Bury defence, and whatever people may think of his ability as an inside forward, I am sure he finds greater scope for his mettle and dash as leader.

ROUGHER PLAY

Hogg showed signs of needing a rest, and I daresay that if Dawes had been

fit the little fellow would have been rested. He was twice very badly brought down on the edge of the penalty area and it seems to me that Second Division football must have earned its reputation as the roughest of the lot, because of the frequency with which players are allowed to trip and get away with nothing worse against them than a free kick.

The Town players have not yet acquired that habit, and I hope they will stick to their football, because it is better to have a name for playing the game than to have a name for winning at any price.

Griffiths was moody and did not finish off his work well, and while I should hate to say anything that would diminish his confidence, he has still a lot to learn before he is up to the standard of Second Division.

HALF-BACK CRITICISMS

At half-back there were queer criticisms. Some of them sent me almost dizzy; I heard condemnation of Loughran, but I thought he played fine football, at times brilliant. The trouble was that his colleagues did not "tumble" to his intentions often enough.

I also thought that Fellowes played grandly; true, his passes were not the perfect patterns we should like, and did not compare favourably with the measured stuff of the Bury flank halves, but he put up a hard and determined game, and frequently sent his forwards to a fruitless attack.

Nelson made one error, and that was when the ball beat him by a particularly high bounce in the first half, and he had the mastery of the Bury leader.

Mackey was not the best Mackey by any means, and hardly knew how to deal with a perky opponent. Had he been playing for some clubs he would have been instructed to "hit him"—plenty of shoulder, of course. Smith was good enough. He also had his hands full against a nippy winger, and in the first half somewhat neglected him, but on the whole he had the better of the duels.

GOALKEEPER'S ERROR

Goalkeepers have none to cover up their errors, and so Dolman gets tagged with chief responsibility for the defeat. Whether the ball dipped as he went for it or not I cannot say, but he should have saved the shot that scored. He made one or two saves, but generally had an easy time, having far less to do than had Ferguson.

Quite a lot of supporters of the Town were speaking in glowing terms of the superiority of the visiting team.

I could never see it. They were on the defensive for longer periods than the Town, and the apparent superiority lay in their team work; better in understanding and co-operation than the Town, they appeared a much better side than they really were. If so much superior, why did they not win decisively. Why was the result determined by a fluke goal?

They were not nearly so dangerous as the Town; their defence was far more sorely taxed, and Ferguson had more strenuous and difficult work than Dolman.

MEASURING UP

Everyone must agree with that, so how are we to measure up their play?

I think they were better than the Town on the wings, and in the skill and co-operation of the wing halves with the attack, and also that their defenders covered each other better than did the Town's rearguard.

Superiority was more apparent than real, and the many opportunities to applaud the individual trickiness of Jones, Whitfield, Rayner and Ormandy, led many to give them an advantage they did not possess.

I will put it this way; if our forwards had shown as much individual trickiness, had tried as much pattern weaving, thousands of voices would have been urging players to "Part with it," and would have been denouncing them for too much embroidery instead of getting goals.

SPECTACULAR FOOTBALL

Bury provided more spectacular football; it was a pretty table-centre, instead of a useful table-cloth.

THE GAME

Luton should have won this game on the balance of play. They failed to do so because they have not yet arrived at that cohesion of attack and unity in defence that is essential.

I am not going to blame the defence a lot; unless forwards can hold the ball and persevere in attack the defence becomes overworked, anxious, and what is more natural than the urge to infuse into attack the punch that is lacking?

It was good to see the team work the offside move so effectively several times;

I hope the defenders will continue to practise it, for only by practice can it be consistently applied with success. It can also be applied every time an opposing forward turns back with the ball, and many times this was the case on Saturday, but the move was not then applied.

TUITION NEEDED

Forwards need a lot of tuition in the cross pass, as they also do in running into position quickly, and making the pass quickly where it is least expected by opponents.

These things will come, and I believe we shall see a fifty per cent. better side when the going churns up a bit.

In the early stages the Town almost overwhelmed the opposing defence, and had Griffiths shot quickly instead of trying to go a yard or two further after he had beaten a player an early lead could have been established..

It was some time before we saw the best of the Bury forwards, but then the ball travelled with precision all along the front line, and then twice in quick time Hogg was brought down a yard outside the penalty area. Stephenson took the first free kick but the ball cannoned off the wall of defenders, and the second, Payne took, struck the bar with a great drive, and Redfern breasted the ball down from the rebound and netted. He was given offside.

FINISHING NOT GOOD ENOUGH

The Town pressed hard, but the finishing was not good enough, though several shots went close, and once Payne's header, following a corner, struck Griffiths and went behind—a very lucky escape for the visitors.

However, the Town had their share of good fortune when Smith twice got right through the defence, but his first shot hit the side net, and the second, with Dolman out of goal, sailed high over.

THE GOAL

Early in the second half Griffiths failed to get hold properly when Loughran had cleverly engineered an attack, and later Ferguson neatly saved a header from Payne. Stephenson made a desperate effort to break through, but fell to weight of opposition.

Then came the all important goal. Bury advanced on the left, and the move was repelled; the ball went across to the middle of the field, and BARGH shot from twenty-five yards range; Dolman went down to the ball and seemed to have it covered well, but it went under his body, and into the net.

The Town pressed fiercely for a long stretch, but the Bury defenders grew in confidence, and although Payne and Stephenson went close, and Griffiths and Redfern both missed chances, no scoring shot could be found, and Bury took the points.

Attendance: 17,518; receipts, £984 4s.