

SUCCESS OF DAWES ON THE WING

Plymouth's Fight Under Handicap

(By CHILTERN)

PLYMOUTH ARGYLE 2
Vidler, Fletcher

LUTON TOWN 4
Roberts (2), Payne, Vinall

PLYMOUTH ARGYLE.—Cann; Kirkwood, Rae; Gorman, Clark, Black; Morgan, Wright, Bourton, Vidler, Fletcher.

LUTON TOWN.—Dolman; Mackey, Smith; Finlayson, Nelson, Fellowes; Dawes, Payne, Vinall, Roberts, Stephenson.

Referee: G. V. Searle, Salisbury.

Luton Town are proving the surprise team of the year when they are on opponents' grounds. They seem far more "at home" when they have to travel, and what can probably be ranked as their three best displays of the season have brought them six of their seven points earned on tour.

After the display against Chesterfield, I am afraid that few supporters had faith in the team's ability to win at Plymouth, so the result must have come as a pleasant surprise to the majority.

To me, the most surprising thing was the quality of the football played by the forwards. They were not recognisable as the ragged lot of the last two Saturdays, but moved like a well oiled machine.

THE BIGGEST FACTOR

Except for a period just after the interval when they all seemed to ease up together, the forwards were the biggest factor in the win, and some of the football they showed was of the highest possible standard.

Still, this period of easing up might easily have brought disaster, for Plymouth took advantage of it to force attack after attack, and I had visions of them equalising after they obtained their second goal. However, immediately the Town put on their fourth point, the Argyle collapsed like a balloon.

It was a grand game to watch, with the exchanges fast and thrilling, and both sides having a fair amount of the play. It was somewhat marred by the injury to Cann in the early stages.

CANN'S INJURY

The goalkeeper was hurt in the opening minutes when he and Stephenson went for the ball together. He recovered after trainer's attention, and gave no sign that he was hurt until he made no attempt to save a shot from Vinall that counted as the third goal.

Then Vidler, the home captain, went to have a word with him, and he did not resume after the interval. The injury proved to be to a ligament of the knee, and Kirkwood took his place in goal.

It is difficult to estimate what effect this had on the result, but, in my opinion, Luton would have won, in any case. They were playing match-winning football, and Cann, had he been fit, would have had no chance with the first two goals.

He probably would have saved the third, but I am sure he would have got no nearer to Roberts' second scoring shot than did Kirkwood.

The Town were 3-1 up before Cann left the field, so the second half exchanges did not materially affect the result. Still, no one could have anything but admiration for the way in which Plymouth played under their handicap.

Their four forwards fought like tigers, and if the Town defence had not been steady in the early part of the second half they might easily have equalised.

NO FLASH IN THE PAN

Luton again began brightly, but this time it proved to be no flash in the pan. We had an early sample of what was to come when Vinall sent in a grand header that hit the bar, and bounced over, with Cann out of position.

The first ten minutes saw Luton attacking consistently, and then the Argyle began to settle down. For a time their forwards looked really dangerous, and Morgan had several runs that had an unsettling effect on the Town defence.

Twice he was allowed to go through after the defence had moved up to get an offside decision, and Bourton missed one great chance. Morgan shot wide with the net yawning in front of him, and it began to look as if the Town were not going to have all their own way after all.

BRILLIANT MOVEMENT BRINGS GOAL

Then, as often happens in football, a period of pressure by one team preceded a goal by the other. What a goal it was. It was the result of one of the most brilliant movements of the day.

The ball came over from the left, and Vinall and Dawes interpassed on the right. Dawes then saw an opening between Clark and Rae, and slipped through a grand pass to ROBERTS,

who had anticipated the move, and run into the inside-right position.

It was a goal all the way even before Roberts shot, and he hit the ball into the roof of the net with all the power he could find. A great goal, intelligently conceived.

However, this was only the forerunner of even better things. Two minutes later Dawes took a pass in his stride and centred beautifully. Cann, challenged by Stephenson, could only punch away to PAYNE, who promptly rammed the ball into the net from about ten yards out.

SPEEDY PASSING

This had put Luton on top of the world, and the forwards proceeded to make hay of the home defence. Brilliant, speedy passing, and fine positioning enabled them to attack consistently, and Payne and Vinall, particularly, were causing trouble.

Then the total was brought to three in eleven minutes by VINALL, who let fly a left foot shot from the edge of the penalty area, and with Cann making no effort to save, the ball found a billet in the back of the net. It was an excellent shot, and Vinall deserved to score.

For a time, it looked as if the Argyle would be overwhelmed, and only inches prevented Fellowes from increasing the score with a low shot from close range.

VIDLER REDUCES

The Town were so much on top that we were not prepared for any retaliation from the home side, and it was a surprise when, two minutes from the interval, they reduced the lead.

It was a good goal, and VIDLER took a canny through pass to run on and give Dolman no chance with a hard rising shot.

Luton began the second half in the same way as they had the first, and Kirkwood was soon given an opportunity of showing his ability as a goalkeeper.

Stephenson, Payne and Vinall all tested him, and Payne looked a certain scorer, but took the ball just too far. Roberts was only just off the mark, and then the forwards seemed to decide to take a rest.

Plymouth began to press hard, and a pass from Wright gave FLETCHER a clear course. It was an accurate ground pass, all along the carpet, and took the



Town defence by surprise. No one could get near enough to Fletcher before he rammed in a shot that passed over Dolman's head into the net.

The ball was travelling at a terrific pace, but it seemed to me that Dolman should have saved.

RARE SPIRIT

Plymouth now played with rare spirit and enthusiasm, and nearly 19,000 people shouted themselves hoarse in encouragement.

Halves came up to join the forwards in attack and some desperate measures were required to keep them out.

Stephenson then had to leave the field for attention following a kick, and in this the home side saw an opportunity. They crowded on pressure, and Nelson and Co. were kept busy. Dolman pulled down several shots in quick succession.

One save from Fletcher was masterly, for the shot looked a scorer all the way. Even when Stephenson returned, Plymouth still pressed, but a big kick by Mackey was the signal for some spirited work by the Town forwards.

ROBERTS SETTLES IT

Play was taken to the other end, and Roberts whipped out a pass to Dawes. The winger centred well, and the ball went out to Stephenson, who pulled it inside to ROBERTS.

The inside left took careful aim, and sent the ball low into the corner of the net just inside the far post.

This was 21 minutes from the end, and was the end as far as the home side was concerned. From this point on the Town forwards took command again, and Kirkwood was given plenty to do.

He kept goal very well, too, though some of his methods were unorthodox. Vinall, Payne and Roberts all missed narrowly with good efforts, while Payne would have had another goal had he not been quite so slow in getting in his shot.

The Argyle had shot their bolt, and for the last twenty minutes it was all

Luton. The forwards shot from all angles and ranges, and Kirkwood deserved the applause he drew.

Save for that do-or-die period in the second half when Plymouth made super-human efforts to get on level terms, Luton always impressed as the more workmanlike side. They were faster on the ball, and positioned better.

The improvement in positioning was perhaps the most striking feature of their play. They made the ball do the bulk of the work, and in consequence, their play was cool and methodical.

In previous matches, the better positioning of their opponents has been the main reason for the Town looking the inferior side, but there was a distinct improvement in this phase of the game on Saturday.

MORE INTER-CHANGING

Also, there was more inter-changing of positions, and it was good to see Vinall going out to the right, and Payne running into the middle. Roberts would not have got his first goal had he not run into the inside-right position.

Luton thought quicker, acted quicker and took their chances. These were the main reasons for their victory, and two goals did not over-estimate their superiority.

The forward changes worked exceedingly well, and to me, Dawes was one of the outstanding successes. Three of the goals came as the direct result of his work, and this position which has caused so much trouble was more adequately filled than it has been in any previous match this season.

DAWES' ACCURACY

Dawes is not as fast as many people think a wingman ought to be, but what he lacks in speed he makes up for in accuracy. I do not remember him placing a ball wrong, and his centres were model.

Every one brought trouble to the Argyle defenders, and if he can keep on dropping the ball into the goal like this, the inside men are going to have a festival.

I liked the calm way he got the ball under control, and took it on, and he never made the mistake of trying to do too much.

Payne did much better than last Saturday, and was more like his old self, though had he been as fit as he was last season, I am sure he would have had three or four goals.

He did a tremendous amount of spade-work, and gave Dawes some fine passes. Vinall is proving, without doubt, one of the best captures the Town have made for some years.

VINALL MASTERED CLARK

His dash and skill combined make him a leader to be feared, and he was constantly in the picture with clever work. Clark was never his master, and Vinall even had the better of matters when the ball was in the air.

He never shirked work, and was out on the wings whenever a helping hand was needed. Roberts repeated his Southampton feat by scoring two goals, and they were both invaluable. His shooting was much improved, and with a little more luck he might have achieved that elusive "hat trick."

Apart from that, he was an efficient cog in the machine, and had a hand in many movements.

His partner, Stephenson, put up a good show on his return to the team. He fitted in well, and although he did not quite touch his best, he showed a decided improvement on previous displays this season.

The passes he received were not of the best, but he was always a thorn in the side of the home defence, and kept on chasing every ball.

NELSON ON TOP OF HIS FORM

Nelson reached the top of his form in this game, and no one was more pleased than myself. The result was that there was no way down the middle at all, and Bourton was kept in almost complete subjection.

Nelson was the big man in the middle of the field in more ways than one, and his head put paid to many of the centres from Morgan and Fletcher.

Finlayson was also at his best, and both he and Fellowes gave the forwards great assistance. Fellowes was not quite so prominent as Finlayson, and many of his passes were not accurate.

Both broke up many attacks with stern tackling, and in this phase, too, Finlayson was rather better.

Mackey's inclusion brought the desired solidity to the rearguard, and it was the wisest move of all.

MACKEY A SUCCESS

He gave Fletcher little scope, and his stern tackling gave a fine lead to his colleagues. Mackey was a success on his re-appearance, and the opinion that he and Smith are the best pair on the books was confirmed. Mackey's kicking left nothing to be desired, and he never took the slightest risk.

Smith, too, had a good match, though he found Morgan rather troublesome. However, he soon got the measure of the winger, and things went well afterwards.

I thought Dolman made a mistake when the second goal was scored, but apart from that, I have nothing but praise for his display. He made some grand saves, and one from Fletcher in the second half was an astonishing piece of work.

The defence all round looked safer, and there were far fewer incidents which called for any qualms.