

BARNSELEY'S GRIM FIGHT AT LUTON

Roberts Gets Goals

BRILLIANT GOALKEEPING BY COEN

(By CRUSADER)

LUTON TOWN 4
Roberts (2), Dawes (2)

BARNSELEY 0

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

BARNSELEY.—Binns; Bokas, Shotton; Jones, Watson, Logan; Fisher, Barlow, Hamill, Asquith, Lang.

Referee: G. Dutton, Warwick.

Barnsley have always had a reputation for fighting spirit and vigour. These factors enabled them to retain a place in the Second Division of the League in many seasons when they met opponents of greater craft and redoubtable name.

At Luton on Christmas Day their team fully lived up to that reputation. There were moments when serious developments threatened, and were averted only by the firmness and by no means ostentatious authority of the referee.

Yet Barnsley had other qualities, too. There were phases in which the football of their forwards, notably the inside wingers, was equal to any individual skill we have seen from much more famous players.

I am quite sure many of us will remember for a long time the dazzling footwork of Barlow and Asquith in those sweeping raids in the first twenty minutes when again and again the only salvation of Luton was the brilliance of Coen.

A GREAT GAME

As a holiday game it was a great spectacle, and every minute for an hour had its thrill, while in the closing stages desperate efforts by Barnsley were often negated by their own deficiencies as marksmen.

Even allowing for the obvious weakness of the Barnsley attack from this aspect, however, only a tough and relentless defence could have held them, and it was not for lack of challenge that Barnsley failed.

Their centre-forward, Hamill, in particular, was brave to the point of recklessness, and only the ability to resist in similar fashion kept him in check, consequently there were stern duels between him and Nelson, and on one occasion the referee found a word of reproof essential for the good of the game.

Mackey, Nelson and Smith gave us anxious moments in the early minutes, but settled down to a give and take struggle, and gained confidence through the successes of the forwards.

FAVoured FORWARDS

Conditions were all in favour of forwards who could hold a ball, for defenders found difficulty in turning quickly, and I thought the Town defenders could well have saved themselves a lot of hard labour if they had shown proper understanding in applying the offside rule.

In the second half they showed better knowledge in this respect, but still left a good deal to be desired.

All kicked and tackled with tremendous power, and with Finlayson and Fellowes plying the forwards skilfully the Town forwards had plenty of opportunity to make ground. Best moves were made when they swung the ball about, and Stephenson alone might well have had three goals had he been a trifle more fortunate with his shots.

Payne again did not sharpen the attack as an inside forward should, but received an injury in the first half that affected his play, and a little while after change of ends he changed places with Dawes, or it might more truly be said that they exchanged positions very frequently. I repeat the contention that Payne is best as a centre-forward.

STEPHENSON THE STAR

Vinall was a neat distributor, though not so prominent as a marksman. Roberts was in fine fettle, and Dawes put in a lot of useful work, but the forward who roused the crowd most was Stephenson. Back he is to his best, and that means a tremendous difference to the attack.

Some of Stephenson's solo runs, or in co-operation with Roberts and Fellowes, were of the fashion of which we saw most two seasons ago, and which brought the spotlight on to him week after week.

The team work was good, but not better than that of the visitors—a speedy and vigorous lot. Their pluck and perseverance deserved something better than empty hands for their return to Barnsley, and while one or two members of the side occasionally evoked the ire of the spectators, their sins were due to sheer enthusiasm rather than deliberate infringement.

BARNSELEY'S DEFENCE

Binns might have prevented the fourth goal if he could have fisted more

accurately Stephenson's flag-kick, but the ball appeared to swerve sharply inwards just at the wrong moment for the goalkeeper, and in any event Binns certainly made many saves when there seemed little hope.

I liked both his backs. They were not very big, but were strong and fast, kicked accurately, and tackled coolly. Their task was made the harder because the middle men could not counter the methods of the Town forwards.

Watson, making his first appearance for Barnsley, showed much skill, but he will have to quicken to hold the position. There was good football sense in what he tried to do, particularly his use of the ball, and it was unfortunate for him that Vinall was content to draw the opposition, for Watson played as though his one object must be to hold Vinall. That is a mistake when a centre-forward has brains.

Flank halves did not compare favourably with Finlayson and Fellowes, and when full backs have to meet a five-men attack it is a difficult business to arrest them.

GREAT ARTIST

Asquith struck me as the finest exponent of ball control we have seen on the ground for years, and I do not except Starling of the Villa or the Arsenal and Sunderland experts.

It was this player's footwork that had the Town defence so badly awry in the early stages, and if any player is in the £10,000 class it is he—or perhaps there should be a saving clause—he should learn to shoot.

This was the one all-important deficiency in the Barnsley attack. They had not a decent marksman in the line. Inside forwards and wingers alike were at fault. Could they have taken their chances with anything like reasonable shooting they would not have lost.

Barlow was not far behind Asquith in some stages, and Hamill was a very hard worker, if somewhat exuberant. The wingers were speedy and were quick off the mark, but their finishing was on the same low level as that of their colleagues.

Summing up, Barnsley played a strong and exhilarating game, and while I think the Town deserved their bonus, the margin flattered them on the run of play.

THE GAME

Attacking from the Kenilworth-road end the Town went off at a rare pelt, and the Barnsley goal was in jeopardy twice within the first minute. A defender hastily turned the ball behind his own goal just in time in the next attack, and Stephenson's flag-kick came across just at the right height for ROBERTS, who headed a fine goal two minutes from the start.

Barnsley were at once on their mettle, and attacked furiously, the left wing getting through, and Lang centred for Hamill to head wide. A corner came just afterwards, the visiting left wing being clever in manoeuvring through, and for a few minutes the Town goal was in danger.

When the clearance came, Stephenson dropped the ball in front of goal, but it was scrambled away. Barnsley returned, and Roberts was penalised for a foul, and from the free-kick Coen saved brilliantly after the ball had been diverted, and he was fouled by Hamill.

COEN'S SKILL

Respite was temporary, and the visitors came again, and the ball seemed destined to find the net when Mackey leapt high and headed clear when Coen was beaten.

Just afterwards Coen dashed out in the nick of time and took the ball from Hamill's toe and then brought off a great save from Lang. Another spectacular save from Fisher was cheered to the echo, and the Town defenders were harassed severely at this stage.

An electric dash by Stephenson left the visiting defenders standing, and Binns saved magnificently, and a moment later the Barnsley keeper got the ball away from a high shot just as Payne went up for it, and both collapsed into the goal.

The Town were now playing better, and Dawes was just too high with a fine drive, and after good work all along the front line Payne shot in for Binns to save neatly. Pressure kept the Barnsley defenders hard at it until Lang broke clean through and flashed a fierce shot only a foot wide.

ROBERTS AGAIN

Binns was fortunate to get to the ball twice in quick succession after clever combination by the Town forwards, but after twenty-five minutes he was again beaten by Roberts. Vinall held the ball to draw the defence and then slipped it aside for ROBERTS to take in his stride and storm between the backs to give Binns no chance.

Barnsley fought grandly, and Fisher was through twice but first sent badly behind, and then his centre was headed away by Nelson, who stopped Hamill with strong tackling just afterwards.

Smith put much life into his defensive work, and his speedy tackling nailed Barlow's efforts to get through.

Following the Town left back's clearance the Town forwards assailed the Barnsley goal, and Stephenson dribbled through in brilliant fashion and then turned the ball gently inside, but Vinall was a yard too far forward to take the pass or a goal would have been certain. Payne had to go off after a collision, and Barnsley attacked strongly on the right, Mackey dashing across and forcing Fisher to shoot wide when the winger had cut in and was facing Coen.

DAWES SCORES

Just before the interval Roberts sent Stephenson away, and the winger, after apparently sending the ball too far ahead, caught it near the corner flag and squared well; DAWES rushed in and beat the backs and Binns from close quarters, and so at the cross-over the Town led by three goals to nil.

Resuming strongly the Town at once tested Binns, Dawes putting in a terrific shot. From the resultant flag-kick by Stephenson the goalkeeper could only hit the ball high into the air, and DAWES darted in and beat him to it as the ball came down, thus heading the fourth goal.

Barnsley renewed their efforts, and Coen effected brilliant saves from Asquith and Barlow. Two corners were forced, and the Town defenders had to work very hard to get the ball away, and the offside law was worked to good purpose two or three times.

BARNSELY MISSES

Luton forwards were not so much in the picture as before, but contrived to make Binns show his skill, Stephenson especially being prominent. Payne was playing on the extreme right, and Dawes was making his presence felt inside.

Watson held up several attacks in the middle, but Finlayson and Fellowes often brought their forwards into play with splendid support.

Hamill missed very badly when he got clean through, and Lang did the same, and then a burst by Stephenson and Roberts ended with the former striking the upright. Roberts narrowly missed just afterwards with a grand shot.

Barnsley retaliated, and Hamill again mulled a splendid chance by shooting too high. Stephenson made better use of his chance a minute later when he broke through again, and Binns brought off a wonderful save, and then cleared cleverly a header from Vinall.

Barnsley fought strenuously for a goal, and just before the close Hamill succeeded in getting the ball into the net, but he was pulled up for fouling a defender. Time came soon afterwards with Barnsley without a goal.

Attendance: 15,693; receipts: £905 13s.