

SWINDON'S SPECTACULAR CHALLENGE

LUTON TOWN'S SURVIVAL IN GREAT CUP FIGHT

Close Play Was Ineffective

COEN'S BRILLIANT SAVES

(By CRUSADER)

LUTON TOWN 2
Ferguson, Stephenson.
SWINDON TOWN 1
Morton

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

SWINDON TOWN.—Bryan; Tonner, Smith; Cousins, Morrall, Musgrave; Jones, Fowler, Morton, Lucas, Hetherington.

Referee: F. S. Milner, Wolverhampton.

Coming away from the ground, and even since then, many people were heard declaiming the virtues of Swindon and the faults of Luton, and I doubt not that a majority of the supporters felt that Swindon deserved at least to draw.

During the progress of the game—I confess this very frankly—I frequently became irritated by the deliberate methods of Luton, which at times were worse than tardy. The Town seemed utterly unable to comprehend the manner of the comings and goings of the Swindon players.

Particularly was this so with the forwards, who time after time were robbed because they could not realise that the visitors were working to a definite plan in which first time tackling and kicking in defence were of paramount import.

Result was that with the Luton flank halves following up the forwards very closely as is their custom found the ball sent well beyond them, and the nimble-footed wingers of Swindon were carrying danger in every stride, and the home rearguard was often in sore trouble.

JUST THEIR NORMAL GAME

Reflection, however, enables one to recast opinion and criticism, and I came to the conclusion that the Luton players decided to follow their normal game. Their play was similar to that of League games; it had not the colour, the flair that inspired every Swindon player.

More than once I felt I should like to see Swindon score just to see Luton stirred into a potent force, and yet one felt instinctively that if Swindon scored it would be doubly hard to break down their defence, which never relaxed vigilance for a moment.

Swindon did score, and you must have seen what happened. They forthwith drew back their inside forwards and flank halves to protect the goal, as they had to a great extent in the early stages. It was a false move, I thought, but on the other hand reinforcement of the defence was necessary, because the Luton forwards did put a little more life into their work when it became necessary.

In any event it was unprofitable could Swindon have maintained that fierce fighting spirit which they brought into their game immediately after change of ends.

Could they have done so? I very much doubt it. I do not think any team could keep up such a pace continuously, and there was always the danger of allowing the Luton forwards too much liberty.

THE POPULAR VOTE

Swindon played the more spectacular football, and for that reason they secured the popular vote, but the quieter and more reflective summing up makes me say that I think Luton just about deserved their success because they did not lose their heads, and while they failed to treat the spectators to the dash and abandon that marked the play of Swindon, the more sober mood prevailed in the end.

We are apt to expect colourful play from both sides in a Cup-tie and to that extent Luton were disappointing, but the proof of the pudding is not only in the eating, but in the aftermath, and the Luton team can always point to the fact that they had the better of the meal.

GREAT-HEARTED PLAY

Let me say that I enjoyed the great-hearted play of Swindon. They adopted the right measures. No slackness in defence anywhere, no dalliance in clearing, no shirking of a tussle, and no bootless dribbling and short passing; healthy open passing, with the wingers as the main agents of attack.

These were the features that captured the imagination, as always, and even though Luton were in Swindon's half for much longer periods than the red-shirted men were to be found in Luton territory, the red raiding parties caused more thrills than the orthodox efforts that were more regular.

We have had ample evidence in other games of what the Luton players can do when they have to fight a losing battle, and so it is a moot point as to what would have happened if the draw had

sent them to Swindon, or if a replay had been necessary, but if one had to weigh up such an eventuality merely from what one saw in this game few people would have been bold enough to bank on their survival.

More than once I asked myself the question: How many of these players from Swindon would be able to command at once a place in the Luton team for a Second Division match? That is a good test, and while there were one or two players that might be coveted, I do not think more than two or three would merit preference over Luton players.

SWINDON'S DEFENCE

Bryan showed remarkable skill on several occasions, and his backs were better coverers than were the Luton pair, but, then, they also had considerable assistance from the flank halves in that respect, whereas the Luton flank halves were invariably playing the part of extra forwards.

Tonner was a useful back, who had the better generally of his tussles with Stephenson, and Smith lived up to his reputation as one of the soundest defenders in the South. As in so many games, the pair of them were in closer contact with the opposing wingers than were the Town backs, though I do not think they were better in recovery.

A POWERFUL PIVOT

Morrall was a power at centre-half but was guilty of more infringements than any other individual, and in nearly every instance the marked man was Vinall. Morrall played a captain's part extremely well, and, apart from the free kicks conceded, he played a splendid game. The wing halves were just useful, quick on the ball, and if not particularly noticeable for service to their forwards, rendered great help to the defence.

THE ATTACK

Of the Swindon attack, Fowler and Lucas were hard workers, doing more foraging than the Luton inside men. Big danger came from the wingers, Jones and Hetherington, who were very fast and not only able to hold the ball, but could get it across neatly. In shooting, however, they failed.

Morton was a constant menace to the Town goal, and he and Nelson had many stern duels. Well was it that Nelson did not leave the Swindon leader too much room, for he possessed a powerful drive, and was usually on the premises when there was a threatening centre.

LUTON'S REARGUARD

Coen had as difficult work as Bryan, and once more justified his inclusion. No fault could be found with him, and he merited much praise. When Mackey kept close up he could usually hold Hetherington fairly well, but once the winger found his stride and the wrong side of Mackey the full-back was beaten. Nevertheless, Mackey did solid work, and was a better cover to goal than Smith.

The latter kicked and tackled well, though still he did not keep in close touch with the opposing winger. His penchant for a dash up the field was tried more than once, and he rarely failed to kick cleanly and a good length.

Nelson had to rush out to the wings again much more frequently than should be the case, and for general understanding I preferred the Swindon defence. Morrall rarely had to stray out of the "box," which was adequate proof that his backs were playing the safer game.

Moreover, the old fault with regard to the application of offside tactics was still too noticeable, and was not properly worked more than two or three times during the match.

FLANK HALVES' WORK

Finlayson and Fellowes were active as ever in support of the attack, and not of very great assistance to their defence.

The answer, of course, is the goals come as a result of their hectoring work.

It is a good answer, though in this game it was not always a wise policy to hold the ball so close when every man on the opposite side was ready to convert himself into a defender.

That both the Luton flank halves gave magnificent support to the attack will be readily agreed.

THE FRONT LINE

Much good work was seen among the forwards, with Vinall and Roberts doing the right thing more often. The finishing left as much to be desired as that of Swindon, and against a closely woven defence more open play would have been more profitable. Very few really good shots were sent in, and the control near goal in the first half was very poor.

Dawes served up one or two hot drives, but was not on the target too often. He also passed neatly to Ferguson, and the latter responded very well indeed, and, at least, showed that he could beat a man at close quarters by tricky feet and quick thinking. Stephenson did not have a good match, but, as often has



LUTON GET THE LEAD.—Ferguson (behind Swindon player on right) gives Luton the lead with a shot that hit a defender and then found the net over the goalkeeper's head.

been the case, compensated for all his shortcoming with a grand goal that won the match.

THE PLAY

Swindon forced the pace from the outset, and Jones might have scored within a couple of minutes if he had kept his head and controlled the ball before attempting a shot; instead he lunged at ball on the drop and it went yards over the goal.

Bryan was the first goalkeeper to show his merit, and a wonderful dive enabled him to turn round the post a grand shot from Dawes. Play was in the Swindon half mostly, but Jones was again in the picture with sharp sprints and centres which would have been very dangerous had there been any other Swindon forward up to meet the ball.

HOT PRESSURE

Roberts shot wide when he had a grand chance after clever work by Vinall, and for several minutes the Swindon goal had to be packed to stave off danger. Free-kicks were not well taken by the Town, and eventually the visitors raised the siege to some purpose. Two or three corners were conceded, but the ball was got away, and at the other end Dawes again tried his luck, a terrific shot just topping the bar, and a moment later Musgrave nearly put through his own goal in foiling the Town inside forwards.

Swindon raided at intervals, but were mainly on the defensive, and it was well for them that the Town forwards could not find their shooting boots. Quick work by Jones and Hetherington again had the Town defenders in trouble, and Coen was forced to put the ball over the bar twice in quick succession, and for a little while the visitors menaced the Town goal persistently.

FIRST GOAL

Three minutes before the cross-over the Town scored. The move was initiated on the left wing, and when the ball came into the centre Vinall hooked it over his head to the right; FERGUSON darted in, tricked Smith and then shot powerfully with his left foot; the ball appeared to strike an intercepting foot in flight, but that made no difference except to cause it to rise high into the net instead of low down.

Swindon resumed their quest in the second half with tremendous zeal. They had the Town defenders running the wrong way, and Hetherington closed in, with the goal almost gaping in front of him, but his shot went straight to Coen, who dropped on to the ball, and although he could not hold it at the first attempt Nelson was there and enabled the custodian to recover.

SWINDON'S EQUALISER

Again and again Swindon swept down, and the Town defenders would not hit the ball hard out of danger first time, consequently, the attacks were never relaxed, and apart from a spurt by Stephenson, which ended with a shot against the side net, the Town had to defend.

Eventually the visitors gained the equaliser and fully deserved it. Coen saved brilliantly at full length a header from Morton; two corners followed, and these were got away with the utmost difficulty, but MORTON took possession again and fired in a magnificent shot which had Coen beaten all the way.

Luton woke up a bit after this, but still the Swindon raids were full of danger, and Coen brought off another grand save from Morton, and Jones and Hetherington found plenty of work for Nelson and Coen.

However, the home forwards and flank halves buckled to work again, and Swindon withdrew their forces to ward off a series of assaults, the main fault of the Town being that they would try to weave pretty patterns against a closely-knit barricade.

STEPHENSON DOES IT

Swindon were keen on retaining equality, and their penalty area held eight defenders, but whenever the Town forwards opened out the game there was danger, and Bryan saved finely two or three times. Then Ferguson suddenly whipped the ball right across the heads of the defenders when no one expected him to do so; Tonner could not get to the ball satisfactorily, and STEPHENSON beat him, closed in and shot a great goal.

Swindon at once changed their tactics, and forced the Town back into the goal area, fighting tremendously hard. Nelson and his backs headed away again and again, and Coen caught and cleared several shots and centres. As the end approached the visitors had shot their bolt, and Luton became aggressive again, and were attacking when the final whistle sounded.

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