

Manchester City's Cup-Tie Victory

VISITORS SUPERIOR IN TEAM WORK

The Luck Of The Toss A Big Factor

(By CRUSADER)

MANCHESTER CITY 3
Heale, Doherty, Nelson (own goal)
LUTON TOWN 1
Payne

LUTON TOWN.—Coen; King, Smith; Finlayson, Nelson, Fellowes; Ferguson, Vinall, Payne, Roberts, Stephenson.

MANCHESTER CITY.—Swift; Dale, Barkas; Percival, Marshall, Rogers; Toseland, Herd, Heale, Doherty, Brook. Referee: A. W. Strange, Bristol.

Luton Town are out of the Cup Competition for another year.

It was not so much that Manchester City beat them, as that they beat themselves.

They have met and vanquished better sides; Aston Villa and Manchester United were better teams than Manchester City, and I am not sure that Burnley and West Ham were not better, too.

In this game Luton had much more of the play than their guests, and on that consideration should have won comfortably, but the City were a better balanced team; their brains functioned better, for they were helping each other with sound co-operative effort when in difficulties not less than when the advantage lay with them.

Undoubtedly the winning of the toss was a very big factor in the result, but even after making full allowance for the handicap that meant to the Town in the first half, so many of their errors were inexcusable.

Only in one feature did I think the City were the better side, but that was all-important: team work; unity of action, understanding as between player and player and department and department.

In those respects the Town were inferior, and while I would give every player credit for courage and determination, the kudos is dimmed by the knowledge that they flouted the first principles of successful team work.

WHOSE FAULT?

It was not merely that Nelson scored a goal against his own side, though that was a shocking blunder for which Nelson was less to be blamed than Coen; it was the fact that the forwards so rarely moved as a line; the passing was lacking in accuracy, and the tackling and kicking of the defenders was below the average of the defence this season.

I wish it had been otherwise. This team can do very much better in every way, and it is not nice to have to expose faults when one knows that every individual player is doing his utmost, and none could doubt that at all.

THE PLAYERS

In view of the formidable character of the City's attack Coen had really a comparatively light task. Certainly not a whit harder than that of Swift, but whereas the City goalkeeper was covered extremely well, and especially in the second half when he most needed it, much of Coen's work came through the blunders of his colleagues.

Some of the spectators blamed Coen for the first goal, but not I. True the ball went underneath him when he dived, but from that range a goalkeeper has little conception whether the ball is coming hard and high or is coming low, and the shot was not less difficult because the shot was not a spectacular sort of effort.

But the third goal, when Nelson was the scorer, seemed to me to be due to the fact that Coen rushed out of goal when there was no need, and when it was so obvious that Nelson was manoeuvring for a pass back. I do not know if either called to the other, but it was a terrible blunder, and each must bear the portion of blame that is his due. Where to draw the line I do not quite know, but I did think that Coen was the chief sinner.

BACK PLAY

King did not do at all badly in the first half. Brook got in a number of hard shots, but was not the force I expected. King stuck to him very well. Nor do I feel that King's injury in the second half affected the result very much. The forwards were not functioning well before then; Vinall had not been a great success at inside right, and the combination was certainly not up to the standard of some of the games seen when Dawes has been there.

What was wrong with Tom Smith? I do not think that he kicked the ball true half a dozen times. Generally the big match has shown him in a very bright light, but somehow he could do little right.

His kicking has been one of the best features of his play; in this game he sliced the ball or it skidded off his foot and went anywhere but to the place it



should have gone, while his tackling was not well timed. I should think this is the first big match in which Smith has been right off colour.

Fellowes was not a great help to him, and the pair lacked understanding. The Town left half did very useful work in attack, but often when he had beaten opponents for possession by shrewd calculation he wasted the ball because he did not bargain for any attempt at recovery. There were several occasions when he was robbed or foiled because he was slow to make use of the ball or to get away with it.

Finlayson put up a very good game. He had to bear his share of the blame for the frequency with which the City left wing got going, but was always working hard, tackled strongly, and kicked as soundly as any player on the field.

Nelson, apart from the goal he had to regret, did very well indeed, and I am sure that no First Division pivot would have held the City's inside men better.

THE FORWARDS

With the forwards it was a case of much cry and little wool. Payne put in all he had, showing any amount of dash, but even in the second half when the Town were pressing so insistently neither Vinall nor Roberts was on the spot to help him, and when Ferguson went inside forward there was still no improvement. Payne invariably had two or three opponents on top of him, but he and Stephenson shared the honours as the best of the attack. Stephenson was up against the best defender on the field, and did very well indeed, and with any luck would have had one goal.

Roberts worked tremendously hard as usual, and in midfield with a fair amount of success, but too often he and Vinall were playing as half-backs, and while this was useful in the first half, they should have changed their tactics afterwards. Three goals in arrears is not overcome by defensive methods. I should hate to say a word in detraction of Ferguson. He was quite good with his opportunities in the first half and in the second he was still a willing worker, and with plenty of courage he stuck up to bigger opponents.

MANY INFRINGEMENTS

The City disappointed me in one respect: more free kicks were given against them for petty infringements than we had seen against any other team this season. Worst of all was the ankle rapping. I wondered more than once where some of them would have been if they had so played against Luton Town a matter of fifteen or sixteen years ago.

For the persistence of this habit the referee was to blame, although I thought that technically he did quite well. A severe word after the first two or three fouls would perhaps have put an end to the tendency, and this course he did not take.

CITY GUARD

I liked the City defence. Swift proved what a great goalkeeper he is. His judgment was superb, and he never showed any sign of being flustered at all, but his long arms reached for the ball, and he disposed of it without fuss and show.

Dale was the best back on the field, his tackling and kicking being very sound, and although he was bothered by the speed of Stephenson at times, he made no serious mistake. Barkas also did well, but his troubles were fewer.

Marshall was a cool-headed pivot, content simply to play a defensive rôle. I do not remember seeing him outside his own penalty area more than two or three times in the first half, and not once in the second if the ball was in the City half at all.

Percival and Rogers were prominent with neat touches to their wings and

they had good understanding with their inside forwards.

THE IRISH CRAFTSMAN

Doherty was the polished player. Some of his swerves and feints and his elusiveness were delightful, but I thought he was inclined to be more Irish than was necessary, namely, that he was disposed to be irked when the ball was taken from him.

Herd was a grafter, but we saw none of his famous shots. Heale was a very clever leader, making very clever touches to his wings, and in spite of the tight grip that Nelson kept on him managed to elude the Town pivot more than once.

Toseland and Brook were very speedy, and the latter showed in the first half what a dangerous forward he can be. His hard, swerving low shot was tried several times, and was always well on the mark. In the second half he was as often playing as an additional half-back or full back as he was in the forward line. Toseland was speedy, and it was his good fortune to meet Smith when the latter was not on form.

TOSS MEANT MUCH

Disappointing as was the play of the Town as a team, we have to hand to them the praise for being so whole-hearted. Their misfortune it was that the visitors won the toss. If Nelson had been successful there would probably have been a different story. The very strong wind gave initial advantage to the City, and they made full use of it.

Other favours went the way of the City, too, and the ball did not run at all kindly for the home team. It works that way some times, but in spite of all this, I feel that they could have won this match, and if they had to play the City again when normal conditions prevailed, I would again name the Town to win. I do not think they would have so much ill luck again.

THE GOALS

The City attacked from the kick-off, but they were driven back, and although they were evidently keen on trying long range shots which would have the strong wind behind the ball, they were not given a lot of chances. The Town halves and inside forwards tackled strenuously, and it was good to see nearly all the team giving the ball plenty of boot first time, and not courting danger.

However, after 16 minutes the ball was taken along the City right wing. The Town defenders were drawn from the centre, and with Nelson also out of position the ball went across to Heale. There were appeals for offside, and the referee raised his whistle, but he did not blow, and HEALE shot into the net, the ball travelling all along the ground, and passing under Coen's body as he fell.

Luton worked hard, attacking many times, but the City defenders crowded round their penalty area, and Swift had no hot shot to stop.

After just under thirty minutes' play the City scored again, and the right wing once more made the necessary headway, and when the ball was centred, Finlayson rushed in and managed to prevent the ball going to the left, but he fell, and while he was on the ground DOHERTY nipped in and netted from close quarters.

Shortly afterwards came the third goal. Nelson intercepted a pass, and was turning towards his own goal with the ball at his toe when Coen dashed right out of goal and almost up to his captain; at the same time NELSON passed back, and the ball went without hindrance into the net. There was not the slightest danger from the City when this goal was scored.

SECOND HALF

After the interval the Town had the wind in their favour, and they quickly assumed the aggressive. They hammered away for long periods, and Payne, Roberts and Stephenson all had hard shots at goal, Swift saving well.

King was hurt, and was off the field for a time, resuming at outside-right, but the Town still continued to press, and only at rare intervals did the City get away, and Coen was not unduly worried.

Still the Town could not score until two minutes before the end, when PAYNE received the ball on his head, and by quick following up headed over two opponents and then headed past Swift as the goalkeeper came out.

This was the last incident of note, and the end came with the City winners, thanks largely to the aid of the twelfth man, Mr. Luck.

Luton will not play at Wembley this year. I shall be very much surprised if Manchester City get there.

Attendance 21,099; receipts £2,875 3s. 6d.