

BLACKBURN ROVERS A SPOILING SIDE

Firmer Control Was Necessary Early In The Game

(By CRUSADER)

LUTON TOWN 1

Clark

BLACKBURN ROVERS 1

Clarke (penalty)

LUTON.—Coen; Smith, Dunsmore; Finlayson, Nelson, Loughran; Clark, Redfern, Vinnall, Connelly, Stephenson.

BLACKBURN. — Barron; Hough, Crook; Whiteside, Pryde, Chivers; Rogers, Butt, Weddle, Clarke, Langton. Referee: T. Smith. Atherstone.

Unless there is a radical change in the methods of football I shall soon begin to feel that the game will be worth less than a candle except to the pools promoters.

It is becoming a rare thing for two teams to play football as the game is supposed to be played. If one team sets out with that high motive the other simply concentrates on putting on the stopper, and we have already had a few examples of this at Luton this term.

Saturday's game was similar to the match with the 'Spurs. Before the referee's watch had begun to tick off the minutes the Rovers' defenders were all out with stop-at-any-cost measures, and persisted until the game as a spectacle had sunk to a low level of sportsmanship.

REPRISALS

Reprisals are unwise. Everybody admits it, but when players deliberately descend to all sorts of infringements just to stop an opponent, it is expecting too much of human nature to put up with it.

Referee Smith is better than some officials, but if he had promptly told the Rovers' defenders without equivocation that he would not hesitate to send "foulers" to the dressing-room, there might have been an opportunity of seeing what some of the very clever players on either side could do

A FEW SPARKLES

Of course, we did see a few sparkling contributions, but usually of an individual character, for there were too many players of either side crowding their own penalty areas whenever there was a slight threat.

This may be good as safety measures, but is not constructive enough for the crowd, and one can well imagine what many of the players of even seven or eight years ago, let alone the real old stagers, were saying about the game.

Luton began in the fashion we expected, but were not allowed to play the game, and I should doubt if a single Blackburn player, except Barron, escaped an award of some description against him for infringement under Law 12. This may appear to be an exaggeration, but is far from it, and when the Luton players started on "getting your own back" then the referee was busier than ever.

CROWD SOON ANGRY

I don't remember a game, not even the 'Spurs match the other week, in which the crowd have started so early and so unanimously to demand that the game should be played in the proper spirit.

The Rovers paid little heed, and some of them repeatedly fouled opponents. It was then the strong hand was required, and a firm caution would have cleansed the game.

On the balance of play the Town should have won, but there was not a lot in it.

The home forwards found a very solid barrier against their efforts, and free kicks from outside the penalty area do not get adequate reward against packed defences.

The Rovers trusted very much to the swift clearances, followed by speedy raids of their wingers, and let there be no mistake about it, these wingers could move, and could control a ball, and they had plenty of pluck. They often had the Town defenders running the wrong way, yet there were comparatively few good shots at goal.

EASY CHANCES

Easy chances the Rovers failed to take, and somehow or other the Town defenders contrived to escape from hopeless positions.

On the other hand the Rovers' rearguard was very compact; defenders clustered under their bar whenever danger threatened, which was often enough, but the Town forwards, while they certainly shot better than in many games, were not quick enough in taking chances, and the hard and risky tackling of the Rovers was not relished.

The Town attacked for longer spells, but there was never such menace in their finishing movements as there was in the Rovers' assaults.

No player could find a gap in the Rovers' defence, but, alas, too many

were found in the approaches to the Town goal, and well it was that Nelson again played such a powerful game.

FIERCE TUSSLES

Each goal was the scene of fierce tussles, and it would have occasioned little surprise had there been half a dozen goals instead of a couple. Coen kept goal very well, and was unfortunate that he could not quite hold the first penalty kick. He got to the ball splendidly, but there was too much powder behind it. Why the penalty was given I do not know, but it was poetic justice that the goal was scored, for Langton had it in the net just after the whistle had gone for the infringement, whatever it was.

Smith did not have a very happy time against Langton—in the first half in particular. In the second period he kept closer to the winger, and did himself very well, but most of the danger came from that wing. Yet Smith twice saved the goal by foresight in dropping back when Coen was beaten.

NELSON AGAIN

Dunsmore played strongly again, though he made one or two mistakes, especially when he tried fancy stuff instead of getting the ball away quickly. Nevertheless he vied with the Rovers' defenders for honours. Nelson was the strong man of the defence again, and often won applause for his interception and the use he made of the ball. Weddle did not have a very good time against the Town skipper.

Finlayson found Clarke an elusive customer, but showed up in support to the attack, and Loughran played very well indeed, putting in an extraordinary amount of work.

TOWN ATTACK

Of the attack Connelly often pleased by skilful moves, but now and then treated the opposition too contemptuously. Vinnall was willing, but was closely shadowed by Pryde, and did not finish at all well. Redfern did many fine things, and had the worst of luck, for his shot which struck the post had Barron beaten all the way, and he came near scoring more than any other player.

Stephenson played more like his old self but might have had much more work. Clark did not shine so much as was expected, but again proved that he can take a chance and his goal was the best shot of the match.

THE ROVERS

Barron kept goal finely, and both his backs were skilful in covering, and were very hard to beat. They kicked strongly, and had complete understanding with colleagues. Pryde did a tremendous amount of work, but the referee overlooked a lot of things that should have been penalised.

Whiteside and Chivers were grafters all the time, but not too scrupulous, and the same goes for one or two of the forwards. Rogers could not have groused had he been taken to task more severely either by the referee or the Town players. Langton was a very clever winger, and Clarke was probably the most dangerous forward, for little was seen of Weddle unless he was getting into trouble of some sort.

Luton opened strongly, and Barron was fortunate to see a ball that he had tipped against the bar turn across to safety. Redfern struck the upright with a grand shot while the goalkeeper was at the other end of the goal.

PENALTY GOAL

Many free kicks were given against the Rovers, but they were in vain, and when the visitors got away they gave trouble. Their left wing was dangerous, and twice got the ball in front of the Town goal, where it was cleared after a scramble, but on a repeat visit Langton himself got the ball into the net, only to turn and see the referee had already awarded a penalty kick, apparently for handling by one of the Town players.

CLARKE took the shot, and hit the ball hard and low; Coen dived, and got to the ball, but it twisted out of his hands and fell over the line.

Luton pressed hotly, but they were repelled by robust tackling, and although they had several corner kicks, they could not find a way past Barron. In a Rovers' attack Coen was beaten, but Smith had fallen back and he hooked the ball out from under the bar with a clever kick.

Vinnall shot well wide after working an opening neatly, and Barron then saved grandly at full length from Stephenson, and at half-time the score stood:

Rovers 1

Town 0

The Rovers were forced to defend on the restart, and Redfern was pushed right off the ball just inside the penalty area, but the appeal failed. The Rovers soon got going again, and their wingers

drilled and centred well and Coen had to be on the alert all the time.

Hough just managed to lunge the ball away from Stephenson as the winger closed in for a shot, and more corners were forced, but they were not often well placed.

CLARK GETS IT

For a time the Town forwards dazzled by clever footwork, and eventually there was a terrific struggle for possession between two or three defenders, Vinnall, Connelly, and Redfern, and the last-named pushed the ball clear of the ruck to CLARK, who shot a great goal, Barron not having the slightest chance, for the ball went right away from him and glanced in off the farthest post.

Free kicks were still very plentiful, and there was a lot of bickering among the players. The Rovers nearly took the lead when Rogers was left in possession a few yards out, and Coen lying on the ground some distance away. However, Smith and Dunsmore had fallen back, and Rogers's shot struck an outstretched foot, and rebounded.

COEN'S SAVE

Followed more pressing without effect by the Town, though Barron brought off three good saves in quick succession, and then the Rovers took command for a few minutes and gave a lot of trouble. They were driven back, but quickly Rogers came through at full speed; Smith raced over, and left Coen to take the ball as he shouldered the Rover, and instantly the referee gave a penalty kick.

Clarke took the shot again, and fired in a similar shot to that which first scored, but this time Coen dived and got the ball properly, and the crowd rose to him for a wonderful save.

Back went the Town, and Redfern slipped the ball through for Vinnall, who had an easy chance, but Redfern pushed off a player who had rushed at him, and the referee gave a free kick against the Town player.

The end came just afterwards with spoils equal.

Attendance: 16,819; receipts: £937 4s.