

HIS INJURY A BAD BLOW TO LUTON

Millwall Scrape Through After A Poor Game

(By CHILTERN)

MILLWALL	2
Fisher, Hedley	
LUTON TOWN	1
Billington	

MILLWALL.—Pearson; Lea, Dudley; Broly, Chiverton, Forsyth; Fisher, Richardson, Barker, Smith, Hedley.

LUTON TOWN.—Coen; King, Dunsmore; Finlayson, Nelson, Roberts; Clark, Redfern, Billington, Connelly, Stephenson.

Referee: S. E. Law, West Brom.

Last season Millwall and Luton Town were in different divisions, and did not meet. Before this match was much more than half over I was wishing that it had not been necessary for them to meet this season.

It was simply a dog fight with little semblance of scientific football. Tempers became frayed, and there were fouls that could be called nothing else but petty.

We all expect a hard game when these two teams meet, and for some reason or other the long-standing rivalry is nearly always apparent in the play.

To make a match between these two teams worth watching—at least for those who go to see good football—stern control is needed from the man with the whistle.

A "HOME" REFEREE

If the referee had been firm, the game might well have been the best we have seen this season. As it was, lack of efficient control made it quite the worst I have seen for some time.

From time to time, we have seen the class of referees, who in football parlance are known as "home" referees. Well, Mr. Law gave me the impression that he would be high up if a list of these were made.

From the first minute when Nelson was wrongly penalised for a foul on Barker, the Town players constantly came under the official's ban, mostly without adequate cause.

Finlayson, for instance, is one of the cleanest players on the Town's books, and yet he had his name taken, and was threatened with further punishment.

TOWN'S PLAY SUFFERED

On the other hand, Millwall got away with innumerable tricks, most of them dirty. The result was that after the first twenty minutes or so, the Town players were in constant fear of being pulled up for fouls.

They dare not take an even chance of going for the ball, and they simply had to take heed of the warnings that were handed out.

Naturally, their play suffered, and it never reached the standard that I have seen in many away matches this season. The forwards received some rough usage, and Billington was all but put out of action for the rest of the match in the first minute.

CONNELLY JUMPED OVER THE LEGS

Clark, too, had a severe shaking up, and Connelly would have suffered a similar fate had he not been adept at jumping over legs that were attempting to trip him.

The front line had a lot of the fight taken out of them by the terrifically hard tackling of the Millwall defence, and it is a long time since I have seen them do so much pressing as they did

in the second half without really getting to close quarters.

Had they been able to get within shooting range, I felt that they would have made "mincemeat" of the Millwall rearguard, whose methods were robust tackling and hard first-time kicking.

Time and again fouls were given against Luton when they should have been the other way, and it was enough to take the heart out of any team.

MILLWALL STILL HAVE PROBLEMS

What good football there was in the match came from Luton, and the few polished movements were carried out by Redfern and Connelly, who were a far more clever pair than Richardson and Smith.

On this showing, Millwall have not solved their problems by their wholesale changes, and it would be far from surprising if they take some real hard knocks in the future.

They relied on kick and rush and sheer enthusiasm as a means of making progress, and they simply would not let Luton settle down to play anything like their normal game.

Millwall had a little more of the play, but Luton could consider themselves somewhat unlucky to have to come away without a point.

NELSON BREAKS HIS NOSE

With all the rough tackling that was going on, injuries could be expected, but there were none of a really serious nature until about 15 minutes from the end, when Jack Nelson received a broken nose.

He went up for the ball with one of the home forwards, and in doing so received the full force of his opponent's boot on his nose. What on earth the Millwall man's boot was doing in the region of Nelson's nose, which, of course, is a fair way from the ground, no one knows.

At any rate, he was led from the field with the injured member bleeding profusely. At the hospital, it was stitched and straightened, and he was able to travel back with the team. The doctor who attended him thought that there was a compound fracture.

UNLUCKY GROUND FOR HIM

It is feared that the injury will keep him out for three weeks, and it could not have come at a worse time. With Lewis also on the injured list, the Club is left in something of a dilemma, which is increased by the fact that they have to face three matches in four days next week-end.

Nelson must have come to the conclusion that the Den is an unlucky ground for him, for the last time he played there he was in a spot of bother with Mangnall, and was suspended for seven days.

MIGHT HAVE MADE IT "HOT"

Actually, this is worse than the loss of the two points in this match, and at this stage there must be some doubt whether Nelson will be fit for the Cup-tie.

I am not going to make this misfortune an excuse for the defeat, for except on one occasion during the second half there was not much prospect of the Town gaining an equaliser.

However, I do think that if they had been at full strength in the closing stages, they might have made it a trifle hot for the Lions.

A man short, they battled on magnificently, with Finlayson in the centre half position. I do not like criticising a player who has suffered a bad injury, but it must be said that the Town defence showed fewer gaps with Finlayson in the middle than it had at any stage during the match.

WEAKNESS IN THE MIDDLE

Against Nelson, Barker looked a really dangerous centre forward, but he never had a look in against Finlayson.

To me, the chief trouble in the first half, during which Millwall scored both their goals, was at centre half. Nelson was far from his best, and even in the air his play was not satisfactory.

The result was that Finlayson and Roberts both had to converge on the middle and consequently threw more work on to the backs, who already had enough on their plates.

BACKS HAD AN ORDEAL

Finlayson, too, was guilty of slowness at times in the first half, but he did much better in the second half, and his display earned him full marks.

At centre half he played in cool, calculating fashion, and he might be given a chance in the position.

Roberts again did well, and his wholeheartedness stood him in good stead. There is no doubt that he is showing a natural aptitude for the wing half berth.

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The backs came through a trying ordeal very well, and the only serious fault I have to find with this department is that Dunsmore was prone to give Fisher too much room.

KING WATCHED HEDLEY

At times, the wingman had ten or fifteen yards to himself. This did not happen often, but often enough to make Fisher the main danger man.

Apart from this, Dunsmore had a good match, and it is to his credit that he more than held his own with the man who gave Leslie Compton such a chasing a few weeks ago.

King kept a close watch on Hedley, and he got the ball far more times than did the winger. His tackling was very good, and his kicking is very much better than it used to be. King has come to stay. There is no doubt about that.

Neither of the shots that counted as Millwall's goals gave Coen the slightest chance, and bad covering in front was mainly responsible for him having to pick the ball from the back of the net twice.

COEN'S FEARLESS WORK

His fearless work earned him praise, even from the Millwall partisans, and more than once, a thrilling dive at the feet of an on-coming forward saved his charge from further downfall.

It was only on rare occasions that the forwards got moving in their best style, and hard though both Redfern and Connelly worked, they did not make a lot of progress.

Each made wonderful dribbles, and were responsible for the few bright spots of the afternoon. They gave a helping hand to the defence, to, and although Connelly was inclined to hang on too long at times, it is difficult to see where their work could have been improved.

LITTLE MATERIAL FOR WINGERS

The wingers, Clark and Stephenson made the most of the limited material at hand, and in the first half, particularly Clark was a lively handful for Dudley.

This youngster is rapidly gaining the necessary experience, and he still looks a very good proposition to me, at any rate.

Stephenson did a lot of useful work, even if it rarely came to anything tangible, but he does not qualify for criticism.

Billington scored his usual goal—the best of the match—and had the ball in the net on another occasion, but the whistle had gone for offside.

DOUBT ABOUT THIS DECISION

There seemed more than a shred of doubt about the decision, and two Millwall defenders, and the goalkeeper, obviously did not think that there had been any infringement. They tried to get the ball away, but Billington beat them all, and if it had been allowed, it would have been a sensational goal.

For the most part, few chances came his way, but he again led the line intelligently.

The first goal to Millwall came after 12 minutes, and was the result of a corner against King. The full back holds that he kicked the ball against Hedley, and that a goal kick should have been awarded.

However, the referee's view was different, and Hedley placed the corner beautifully. Coen went up to it, and charged by a Millwall forward, could not make a complete clearance.

A LUCKY GOAL

The ball dropped in the penalty area to FISHER, who blinded it for the net. How it reached its objective is a mystery, and both Roberts and Dunsmore aver that it went between their legs. A lucky goal to say the least.

Shortly afterwards, nearly everyone on the ground thought that Clark had obtained the equaliser, for he crashed in a brilliant first time shot from across by Stephenson. It looked a winner all the way, but Pearson managed to get his hand to it, and turn it round the post.

EASY FOR HEDLEY

The Lions went further ahead after 31 minutes, and Fisher again had a hand in the success. He was sent away with a clear field, and with no one to challenge, lifted the ball into the goal-mouth.

Nelson touched it with his head, but merely deflected it to HEDLEY, who was left with a chance he could scarcely miss. Even so, Coen got his finger tips to the ball without being able to stop it.

The Town's only success came three minutes from the interval when Clark made a pass to Redfern, who cleverly lifted the ball over Chiverton's head to BILLINGTON. The centre forward controlled it well, and picking his spot, gave Pearson no chance with a shot into the far corner of the net.

STEPHENSON'S SECOND HALF EFFORT

The second half brought no goals, and indeed, they seldom looked like coming. Luton made their only real threat through Stephenson, who broke through with the ball at his feet.

Pursued by defenders he shot quickly, and Pearson, who had narrowed the angle, pushed out his foot, and turned the ball for a corner.

At the other end, Hedley should have increased the Lions' lead when he went through from a palpably offside position. He was under the impression that he had infringed, and as Coen came out, did not take a lot of pains with his aim. The ball hit the post, and Coen caught the rebound.