

PLAY GRAND FOOTBALL IN SEA OF MUD

Finishing Lets Them Down Once More

By **CHILTERN**

LIVERPOOL 3
Balmer (2), Paterson.
LUTON TOWN 0

LIVERPOOL.—Kemp; Harley, Ramsden; Eusby, Bush, McInnes;; Nieuwenhuys, Taylor, Fagan, Balmer, Paterson.

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

Referee: M. J. A. Tucker, Nottingham.

Luton Town are out of the Cup at the first time of asking, but they kept up their reputation of being great Cup-fighters, and gave their famous opponents many shocks before they finally gained the upper hand.

The actual result is an almost fantastic reflection of the play, and never at any time were Liverpool three goals the better side.

Taking the game through and through, I doubt if there was one goal between the teams, and at any rate, Liverpool could claim no marked superiority.

The Liverpool officials, and the bigger part of the 40,000 spectators were loud in their praise of the Town's display. Naturally, they were very bucked about their win, but they recognised, too, that luck had been on their side.

BETTER FOOTBALLING SIDE LOST

In my opinion the better footballing side lost. On a pitch that was half a skating rink and half a mud patch. Luton played some wonderful football, and the homesters were never so well together, nor so fast on the ball.

The only department in which Luton were not at least the equal of their conquerors was in finishing. They had more scoring chances, but failed to accept them. On the other hand, the opportunities that fell Liverpool's way were few, but they managed to accept three of them.

Looking at the game from that angle, they deserved to win, for it is the team that makes use of everything that comes their way that makes progress in the Cup.

AS CLOSE AS THAT

Luton put up a very much better show than I dared hope for, and until the last ten minutes or so they always stood a chance of earning a replay.

Yes, it was as close as that, and even after Liverpool had scored a second goal, the Town might well have pulled the game out of the fire had Billington been able to turn to account what was absolutely the chance of the match.

GOAL WAS BADLY NEEDED

All through the game, Luton needed a goal very badly, and had they been fortunate enough to score first, I think that they would have provided another sensation.

A goal in the first half would have put them in clover, and given them that little extra confidence. We all know what first blood in a Cup-tie means to a team, and when Liverpool opened their account, it simply put new life into them.

Luton were by far the better team in the first half, and the forwards played some amazingly good football on the treacherous surface.

Time and again, the home defence was in trouble, but as at Norwich, the weakness was in front of goal. However, much of it was forgivable, for with the turf in such a terrible condition, it was difficult for the players to keep their feet, let alone deliver a scoring shot.

GREAT SHOT—GREAT SAVE

Best effort of the half came from Billington, who sent in a terrific shot that seemed booked for the corner of the net all the way. Kemp reached it,

but how he managed it is a mystery, and he touched the ball sufficiently to divert it round the post.

A wonderful shot and a wonderful save, and the crowd rose to both players.

Seventy-five per cent of the first half play was contested in the Liverpool half. The homesters' attacks were confined to breakaway, and so keen was the marking of the Town halves and backs that they were speedily driven back before they reached anything like shooting distance.

NEVER LOOKED LIKE SCORING

It was quite 20 minutes before Coen had to handle a direct shot, and throughout the half, the Liverpool forwards never looked like a goal-getting force.

On the other hand, Luton with Finlayson and Roberts driving on the attack, always seemed likely to score, but somehow or other, a goal never came.

Liverpool had some very narrow escapes, particularly when Harley headed out a shot from Billington after the centre forward had dispossessed Kemp, and beaten Bush.

Then, we saw Stephenson catching the limelight with some thrilling runs down the wing. Three times in as many minutes he broke clean through, only to be baulked before he could get in his shot.

HARLEY GOT THERE IN TIME

I thought he should have scored on the first occasion, but he delayed too long, and Harley showed some of the speed that made him a Powderhall winner, to clear at the expense of a corner.

It is easy to criticise missed chances of this kind, but I do appreciate the difficulties prevailing, and I think that if the pitch had been in anything like normal conditions, Stephenson would have made no mistake.

This was just another instance of what might have been, and there were many others in the first half. At the interval there could have been no grumbles from Liverpool if Luton had had a lead of two goals.

PROSPECTS LOOKED ROSY

Liverpool were being steadily outplayed by a more capable side, and at half-time, Luton's prospects looked rosy, especially as they were attacking the better half of the field in the second session.

However, things went wrong, and I suspect that Liverpool heard some straight-from-the-shoulder talk during the interval.

At any rate, they began the second half with a rush, and Fagan nearly had the ball in the net before Luton knew that the game had re-started.

The Town shook themselves into action, and Billington gave the home supporters a shock with another high power drive that Kemp just managed to reach at full length.

THE FIRST BIT OF TRAGEDY

Then, six minutes after the resumption, the first bit of tragedy for Luton occurred. The defence was striving to drive off a hot attack, and the ball went over to the right.

Fagan got it, and Roberts went over to tackle. Unfortunately he made his tackle from behind, and tripped the centre-forward.

The referee unhesitatingly awarded a free kick a yard outside the penalty area, and I, at any rate, had no grumble at the decision.

It was the direct cause of the home side taking the lead, for Nieuwenhuys placed the ball beautifully, and BALMER, jumping higher than anyone else, nodded it goalwards.

Coen seemed to get to it, but he may have been unsighted, and the ball slithered over the line with the Town defenders almost tearing their hair in anguish.

LIVERPOOL GET ON TOP

This success was followed by Liverpool's best spell, and they got well on top for some time. Coen made magnificent saves from Taylor and Busby, and Nieuwenhuys drove the ball yards wide from an ideal position.

Still, for the most part, the Town defence was equal to all demands. After a spell of inaction the Luton forwards rallied again, and it was Liverpool's turn to do some strenuous work in defence.

There was still plenty of time for an equaliser, and the crowd was agog with excitement. Luton's ill luck near goal persisted, and then, when the rally was at its height, came further tragedy to Luton.

WHEN DUNSMORE SLIPPED UP

As is often the case, Liverpool's second goal had a small and seemingly harmless beginning, and, curiously enough, followed a free kick against the home side.

Dunsmore took it, and my view of the

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incident is that he thought the ball should be placed further up the field, and he merely kicked it along the ground.

However, the whistle had gone, and the ball was quickly snapped up by Nieuwenhuys, who booted it down the right wing.

Even so, it is probable that no goal would have come had not Connelly, who had dropped back, and Dunsmore waited for the whistle to blow for offside against Taylor.

AN AWKWARD CENTRE

There was no infringement, and Taylor lifted the ball into the goalmouth. It was an awkward centre, and Coen did well to reach it at all.

The only thing he could do was to flick it away to the left, and it went straight to PATERSON, who lobbed it into the net before Coen could recover.

That was eight minutes from the end, but even so the game would not have been completely settled if Billington had accepted a chance that came to him after Kemp had beaten out a shot from Stephenson. He was less than ten yards out, but lifted the ball over an open goal.

In the next minute, Clark also failed to connect at close range, and that was the end of it all as far as Luton were concerned.

REMARKABLE THIRD GOAL

Not for Liverpool, though, for the last minute of the game brought them one of the most remarkable goals I have ever seen.

There was some discussion after the match as to whether it should have been disallowed, on the grounds of dangerous play, but it looked good to the referee, and that is all that matters.

Nieuwenhuys whipped in a centre, and it seemed any odds on either Coen or Dreyer clearing. The ball was between them, and as both were shaping for it, BALMER came like a bolt from the blue and flashed the ball into the net with his foot.

The dangerous play part was that Balmer had his foot head high. Still, it did not matter one way or the other, and this glorious goal was a fitting ending to a splendid game.

POOR REWARD FOR TOWN DEFENCE

Actually, in view of the conditions in which the game was played, it was a classic, and full praise must go to the whole twenty-two players for the way they overcame the difficulties.

The last two goals puts an entirely wrong complexion on the game, and is a poor reward for the heroic work put in by the defence.

It was just unlucky that two of the goals were due to lapses, but it was something of a miracle that there were not more slips on both sides.

CONDITIONS NOT IN LUTON'S FAVOUR

The result can be forgotten, and Luton worthily upheld the standard of the Second Division. If they had merely drawn, Liverpool would have been satisfied with their lot, and their officials were the first to admit that good fortune had smiled upon them.

The Town earned nothing but praise for a wonderful fight, and if this match had been played on a dry ground, Liverpool would have had an even harder struggle. The conditions were all against Luton, but they got in from the start, and showed that Second Division football is little, if any, below that in the top grade.

DUNSMORE WAS OUTSTANDING

There was always plenty of excitement in the play, and rather a lot of fouls, although very few of a vicious nature. Liverpool were the chief offenders in this way, and the Town were awarded many free kicks.

The player in the Luton team who caused most discussion after the match was Dunsmore, who was undoubtedly the outstanding defender on the field.

Any fears we had that he would be unable to hold Nieuwenhuys were totally unfounded, for the winger experienced one of his leanest matches ever, and the number of times he beat the full back could be counted on the fingers of one hand.

Dunsmore's tackling was always hard and fierce, and his kicking was accurate and of good length. It was unfortunate that a misunderstanding on his part should lead to the second goal, but that was the only blot on a magnificent display.

KING DID NOT PUT A FOOT WRONG

Tom King was very little behind his partner, and he saw that Paterson was blotted out in very much the same way as Nieuwenhuys. His close marking proved disconcerting to the winger, who, apart from scoring a goal, did little.

Once again, King kicked beautifully, and he scarcely put a foot wrong throughout the match. In fact the whole defence played as well as in any previous match this season, and did more than their share towards giving Liverpool such a fright.

Dreyer was always a great destructive force in the middle, and did extremely well against the dashing Fagan, who was forced to change his tactics after the interval, and go out to the wings in search of open spaces. On this display, Dreyer deserves to keep his place, and he was always a safe bulwark.

Another player who excelled himself in very much the same way as Dunsmore was Finlayson, who gave his best display of the season. Working

desperately all the time, he was a great factor in attack and defence.

The only fault I could find with him was an inclination to dribble near the penalty area, when a first-time shot would have suited much better.

Roberts also did very well, and it was due to the fine play of the halves and backs that Liverpool were made to look such an ordinary team in the first half. Roberts was consistently good throughout, and he made superhuman efforts to rally his men in the second half.

CROWD ROSE TO COEN

Coen did not have so much to do as Kemp, but he had several ticklish shots to deal with, and at least four times in the second half he earned the cheers of the Spion Kopites with thrilling saves.

One clearance from Busby matched that made by Kemp in the first half from Billington, and Coen can come in for very little criticism.

Liverpool, by the way, owed much to their goalkeeper, who made some magnificent saves when things were going badly for them.

The inside trio, Redfern, Billington and Connelly, were better than the Liverpool inside men in every phase of the game except finishing. In the first half, they reached great heights by the quality of their play, and they passed and inter-passed as if the pitch was in perfect condition.

Billington did most of the shooting, and he had some terrible luck at times. But for Kemp, he would probably have found the net twice before Liverpool opened their account, and that would have been sufficient to put Luton in the next round.

He could always beat Bush when the ball was on the ground, but the centre-half, who stands 6ft. 2in, had the better of matters in the air. His bad miss in the second half was another bit of tragedy for the Town, but he was playing football all the time, and was more dangerous than Fagan.

Redfern was again the pick of the line, and was a prodigious worker all the time. In defence, he did much great work, and was continually going back to help. His footwork in the mud was something one dreams about, and Liverpool had no forward to match his skill.

CONNELLY WAS CLEVER

Although not so effective as Redfern, Connelly showed cleverness and craft, and he made some grand passes. Clark did not have a very happy time against the hard tackling, speedy Ramsden, and did best in the first half when he got across some useful centres.

The right winger was a trier all through, and at least deserves full marks for his pluck. At times, Stephenson looked what he can be, a match-winner, and he gave the home defence some real scares in the first half.

If he had been able to finish off his work, he would have hit the head-lines in a big way, but he could not quite manage a scoring shot. Still, he came out very well in his tussles with Harley.

The main weakness was in finishing, and a sharpshooter was badly needed, although had luck been on Billington's side, he would have provided the goods all right.

Attendance, 40,431; receipts, £2,451.