

TOWN DEFENCE AGAIN IN MAGNIFICENT FORM

Hammers Handicapped By Injury To Morton

By CHILTERN

WEST HAM	0
LUTON TOWN	1

Redfern

WEST HAM.—Medhurst; Bicknell, Walker (C); Corbett, Walker (R), Cockcroft; Foxall, Macaulay, Small, Goulden, Morton.

LUTON TOWN.—Coen; King, Dunsmore; Finlayson, Dreyer, Roberts; Burgess, Redfern, Vinall, Connelly, Stephenson.

Referee.—G. Dutton, Warwick.

The Town's luck in London seems to be changing, for their last two visits have brought full points, while before that they had only one point to show from five matches in the Metropolis.

After their defeat at Blackburn, Luton simply had to avoid defeat in order to keep in the promotion fight.

They went on the field with that feeling, played like it throughout. No risk was taken, and although the game could have been far more interesting, the outcome was good enough for the Town.

It was unfortunate that the "Hammers" had to do without Morton for 55 minutes. He suffered a badly wrenched knee ten minutes before the interval when going up to the ball with King, and had to be carried from the field.

MORTON'S INJURY A PURE ACCIDENT

This was a pure accident, as the referee showed by allowing play to proceed, and not stopping it until it was obvious that Morton was badly hurt.

He bounced the ball on the resumption, but even this could not convince some of the Hammers' supporters that it was an accident.

We heard some of the now rather familiar cries of "Dirty Luton" and in this instance, they were never less deserved.

The game was marred to some extent by the number of fouls, and it must be admitted that Luton were chief offenders.

A few things occurred that were reprehensible, but most of the offences were due to over-keenness, and can be attributed to the bitter fight that goes on in every match these days for those invaluable League points.

NOT MANY BAD FOULS

However, it was not one-sided by any means, and the referee missed quite a lot of things done by the "Hammers." Although it was a similar match to that at Tottenham fouls were by no means so frequent, and there were few really bad ones.

It is true that Connelly committed a couple that would have been a lot better undone, but although this is no excuse for such behaviour, he did have a terrific shaking up just before he was penalised for the second time.

I saw Dunsmore go in rather recklessly once with a foot a trifle high, but, here again, I think it was a case of over-enthusiasm.

ALWAYS WENT AFTER THE BALL

One thing, however, is that the Town players were invariably going in after the ball, and it was seldom that anyone went to a tackle in a way that was calculated to injure an opponent.

To me, that is the acid test, and the fact that there was no other injury, apart from minor shakings, but the accident to Morton, should be good enough for most people.

The Town's play generally has undergone a change during the past few months. They have come to rely much more on the defence than they did during last season and the early part of this.

In the rear guard now, they have men who are afraid of nothing, and go into each tackle with the idea of getting the ball. They are making their presence felt, and their weight, too, and it is inevitable that there should be cries of rough play when the team is away from home.

It was the defence chiefly that earned full points on Saturday, and, once more, they played magnificently. Time was when if the forwards did not score three or four goals, points simply would not come because of the weakness behind.

Times have changed, and the defence, at present is the sure rock it was in the season Luton won promotion.

On Saturday, the Hammers rarely looked like scoring throughout the match, although they probably did rather more pressing than did the Town.

"HAMMERS" PUT UP A GAME FIGHT

What would have happened had the "Hammers" been at full strength throughout, no one can say, but I do think that Luton would not have been beaten.

Even when Morton was playing, the home all-star forward line never seemed likely to open their account, and the International outside-left could make nothing of the hard tackling King.

Foxall was similarly out of the picture, though he was always the man most likely to pierce the Town defence.

Still, we must give the "Hammers" due credit for the way they played up under their handicap, and they did make some wonderful efforts to save a point.

FINISHING WAS WEAK

However, clever though some of their approach work was, their finishing was poor, and Coen was never really tested.

One header from Goulden in the second half deserved a better fate than to miss the far post by inches, but that was the only effort that really deserved better than it received.

While the "Hammers" had eleven men, there was little to choose between the teams, but Luton had made the better efforts to score, through Redfern and Connelly. The inside-left was really unlucky with a terrific shot that struck the bar and bounced over.

LIGHT BALL WAS DIFFICULT

There was a lot of poor football on both sides, but most of this was due to the hard ground and light ball. After their mudbath at Blackburn, this must have been strange to the Town, but, in the end, they showed that this going suits them better.

At the start, I thought that the football feast that this match might have been would come about, but play gradually deteriorated, and in the second half, play was decidedly scrappy.

There was too much big kicking and far too many throws in.

True to their aim of keeping in the promotion hunt, the Town took no chances subsequent to scoring 13 minutes after the interval.

The goal took everyone by surprise, mainly because of the quickness of the move. Play was being made on the left wing near the centre line when suddenly, Connelly hit the ball hard to Stephenson, who had run inside.

REDFERN'S PRETTY GOAL

Stephenson stuck out his foot, and deflected the ball between the Hammers' backs. REDFERN was standing between them, and he snapped up the ball, slipped through, and calmly placed the ball past Medhurst from close range.

It was a pretty goal, and Redfern must have heaved a sigh of relief when he saw that he had guided the ball safely into the net.

He has had a lot of bad luck with his shooting lately, and it may be that this goal will enable him to regain much of his lost confidence.

REDFERN HIT THE BAR, TOO

This was essentially a match for defences, and they took nearly all the honours. Medhurst had more difficult shots to save than did Coen, and Luton's margin might have been bigger, with a little more luck.

Apart from Connelly's effort in the first half, Redfern also struck the woodwork with a grand header late in the game, while one shot from Vinall nearly deceived Medhurst, who just managed to punch over at the last moment.

From the way the game went in the second half, the "Hammers'" handicap was scarcely noticeable, for they did a lot of attacking, only for the movements to break down against a cast-iron defence.

Small could do nothing against Dreyer, and when Foxall moved into the middle halfway through the half, he was no improvement, and Dreyer was quite capable of holding him.

NEVER MUCH FEAR OF AN EQUALISER

The Town worked the offside trap very well, too, and Foxall was repeatedly held up in this way. After once getting their noses in front, Luton concentrated in keeping the "Hammers" out, and there was never much fear of an equaliser, though several corners were forced.

The nearest they came to getting a goal was when Coen made an error by thinking that the whistle had gone for offside, and allowed himself to be beaten by the bounce of a slow shot. It passed over his head, but he quickly realised that play was still on, and scrambled the ball away.

WEST HAM ATTACK LACKED PUNCH

The "Hammers" attack as a whole lacked punch, and by trying to be too clever, contributed to their own downfall. Goulden was a long way from International form, while Macaulay was much too slow, and was usually an easy mark.

Their defence, however, was sound

enough, and compared with that of Luton, Walker (R.) was a very strong centre half, and the two full backs gave nothing away.

The crowd got very restive in the second half, and the referee stopped play while a corner was being taken at the Town end to call a couple of policemen to them. At the other end, they began to throw something that looked like orange peel, and two more policemen stationed themselves behind this goal.

This did not help the play to reach greater heights, and it really was something of a relief when the end came.

FORWARDS MORE FORMIDABLE

It is always difficult to assess the true value of a win when one team is short of a player, but I do not think for one minute that the Town would have lost this match in any case.

They showed a great improvement on their display at Blackburn, and the team work was much better. Each player was out for the best for his side, and the covering up and backing up was good to see.

Although the forwards were not quite the goalscoring force I would like to see, they, too, were more formidable, with the inside men less inclined to individualism.

REDFERN'S BEST SINCE CHRISTMAS

Redfern had his best match since Christmas, and some of his footwork was brilliant. He was continually popping into the picture with bright bits of play, and apart from his value in attack, did fine service in defence.

For the first time for some weeks he really looked like a player sought by several clubs, and I hope his luck has taken a turn for the better.

At times, I have had to criticise Connelly rather severely, but his genius has never been in doubt. His main fault has been that he has not turned his talents to proper advantage, but in this match he was more of a unit in a machine than an individualist.

VINALL FILLED THE BILL

He was a worker throughout, and more than that, was parting with the ball at the right moment, instead of taking it on too far as he is prone to do.

The return of Vinall to the side was watched with some interest, and he filled the bill adequately. As usual, he was a prodigious worker, and deserved rather more luck than he got.

Few chances came his way, but he made the most of the ball, and held the line together very well. He has been troubled by a groin injury for some weeks, but he showed little sign of it, and was always harassing the defence.

STEPHENSON CLOSELY WATCHED

The wingers were not quite so prominent as they have been, and Stephenson had only a moderate day. He was closely marked by Bicknell, and although he tried hard enough, did not find things running his way.

He missed some good passes because of his habit of moving into the middle, and although I have admiration for a winger who will go and fetch the ball for himself, this can be overdone.

Burgess did not receive so many passes as Stephenson, and for the most part was shut out by the close marking of Walker (C.).

This boy is a trier, and it was lack of experience more than anything else that beat him. When he gets this experience, he is going to be a top-notcher.

NO WEAK LINK IN DEFENCE

The defence earned most of the honours, and once again there was no weak link. Roberts was not quite up to his usual standard in the first half, but improved after the interval, and played grandly.

As usual, he got through a tremendous amount of work, and the same applied to Finlayson, who touched peak form in the second half. The right half was a strong man in defence, and often came out with the ball at his feet.

DREYER—MASTER OF THE MIDDLE

Dreyer seems to be becoming a more polished player every week, and followed up his smashing display at Blackburn with another grand exhibition.

He was the master of the centre of the field from the start, and Small had a most uncomfortable time against him. Time after time he stepped in to make a clever intervention, and apart from his usual hard tackling, was playing football at the same time.

Dreyer has definitely come to stay, and the rest of the defence is relying on him in much the same way as they were on Nelson a few months back.

KING DOES WELL AGAIN

King is another player who is at the top of his form at the moment, and he gave a grand exhibition in the first half against the English International left wing.

Morton rarely got past him, and when he did, King usually recovered so quickly that the winger was caught in possession. In the second half, his task was made easier by Morton's absence and he again played splendidly.

His one weakness is in kicking, and he put many balls into touch, apart from the ones he intended to go there.

Dunsmore kept a close watch on Foxall, and did his side a good turn by the way he subdued this dangerous player. He, too, was quick in recovery, and he kicked better than King.

Coen did not have a lot to do, but was confident, and made some exceptionally clean catches.