

ANOTHER BLANK DAY FOR THE FORWARDS

Luton The Better Side Until United Scored

By CHILTERN

NEWCASTLE UNITED 2
Clifton, Pearson (pen.)

LUTON TOWN 0

NEWCASTLE UNITED. — Theaker; Craig, Ancell; Gordon, Denmark, Wright; Birkett, Scott, Frost, Clifton, Pearson.

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

Referee.—J. E. Williams, Bolton.

Newcastle put paid to all the Town's hopes of promotion, and we can take consolation for the defeat from the fact that even if Luton had managed to win, it would have made no difference because of the success of the Sheffield teams.

Even so, I should like to have seen Luton take two points from this match, and it was one that they should not have lost.

Weakness in front of goal contributed more than anything else to the defeat, and, in the first half particularly, several very likely chances were allowed to slip by.

That was during the first half hour when Luton had their best spell during the match. The chances were there, but there was a certain amount of bad luck in the way they were missed.

FIRST GOAL WAS THE TURNING POINT

However, no team can throw away scoring opportunities away from home, against a team of the calibre of Newcastle and then expect to win.

Up to the time the United scored their first goal, I thought the Town would win this match, and they were shaping along those lines. The goal which came five minutes from the interval was the turning point of the game, and it seemed to put out Luton completely.

They never reached their best form after that, despite the fact that for almost the whole of the second half Newcastle lacked the services of Wright, who damaged either a cartilage or a ligament.

FEW KNEW OF WRIGHT'S ABSENCE

The curious part about this was that half the people on the ground did not know that the United were a man short. It was quite 15 minutes before it was noticed in the Press box.

It appeared that he suffered the injury just before the interval. He resumed for the second half, but went off again immediately.

Against ten men, Luton had a worse time than they had had against eleven, and from the play it was not apparent that Newcastle were labouring under any kind of a handicap.

LUTON SHOULD HAVE TURNED THE SCALES

It often happens that a team fight all the harder when they are a man short, and this happened in this match. Still, Luton with a numerical advantage should have been able to turn the scales during the second half, but they failed to turn it to account.

In fact a goal to Luton after the interval seemed likely on very few occasions, although they had a greater share of the play.

No one seemed able to deliver a telling shot, and the home defence, took a grip that was not relaxed.

Yet, the Newcastle defence was none too confident in the first half, and got really rattled on occasions. When the Town were well on top during the first half hour, the home goal had some astonishing escapes, and more than once it seemed impossible for a score not to come.

THEAKER HAD TWO SLICES OF LUCK

Theaker knew nothing at all about one shot from Billington. He put up his hands to save, but the pace of the ball beat him, and it was his face, and not his hands that kept the ball from going into the net.

Redfern was a little too slow to turn the rebound to advantage, and the same applied to Connelly when a full-blooded, first-time drive from Carroll struck the

goalkeeper when it looked booked for a billet in the back of the net.

LUTON GOAL HAD ESCAPES, TOO

This was the nearest approach to a goal for Luton, and they could count themselves unfortunate that they did not take the lead at this juncture.

Had they gained that reward, it would have been deserved, but at the same time, their own goal escaped in amazing fashion on two occasions.

At this stage, the game was going on very much the same lines as the one against Millwall, with the Town pressing hard. Newcastle's attacks were confined to sharp breakaway which were usually brought to an abrupt end by the employment of offside tactics.

However, once the trap failed to work—not through any fault of Luton's—but through misjudgment by the referee, Frost, although clearly offside, was allowed to carry on, and with no one within ten yards of him, he had only Coen to beat.

COEN FOILED FROST

It looked a goal all the way, but Coen came out and managed to divert Frost's not very good shot wide of the post. Then again, Scott was left with a splendid opening, but his effort was poor, and the chance was lost.

These were the bright spots of a first half that was often dull. However, conditions were not too good, for the ball was light, the ground hard, and there was a troublesome cross wind.

Until Newcastle took the lead, the Town were the better side, and if they had been able to score, I think that the points would have been safely in the bag.

GOAL WOULD HAVE BEEN A TONIC

The forwards badly needed a goal to give them the confidence that was necessary after their goalless day against Millwall. This may have been part of the trouble, and the tonic of a goal would probably have brought about extra steadiness in the penalty area.

Before they went ahead, Newcastle

were a team of strugglers, and their success pepped up their play considerably. The improvement was noticeable immediately, and they crowded on pressure in the last five minutes.

The all-important goal came as a direct result of a free kick for a foul by Dunsmore on Clifton. The inside man had worked his way through, but was pulled down from behind.

Gordon took the kick, and lobbed the ball into the goalmouth. CLIFTON was on the spot, and with no defender making a challenge, he had all the time in the world to pick his spot, and head the ball hard, well wide of Coen's left hand.

In the second half the Town began promisingly enough, and attacked hard, but their previous failures seemed to be weighing heavily on them.

NOT DANGEROUS AT CLOSE QUARTERS

Although they continued to have the major share of the play they were not dangerous at close quarters, and there were few shots of any consequence.

In fact it was not often that they managed to get to close range, for Newcastle packed their goal, and quite often, all their players, except Frost and Birkett, were crowded in the penalty area.

The home team were quite content to cling to their slender lead, and not much attention was paid to attack, especially when Clifton had been moved to left-half in place of Wright.

Luton kept pegging away, and they tried hard enough. The ball rarely ran right for them, but the finishing as a whole was weak.

FEELING CREPT INTO THE PLAY

Much of the second half play was scrappy, and there was little football of the class we expect from such teams as Newcastle and Luton. There was a good deal of bad feeling, and Dunsmore was twice involved in scenes, one with Scott and one with Pearson.

Joe Coen acted as peacemaker in the one instance, and there were other things, too, that were not quite the thing. The crowd, naturally, blamed Luton, but the Town players had to put up with a lot before they began to do a bit on their own account.

Some of the home players were not too particular about their tactics, and there was a lot of unnecessary rough play on both sides.

PENALTY SEALED TOWN'S FATE

Stoppages for free kicks were frequent, and there were occasions when the referee was not firm enough. He gave some queer decisions against both sides, and the penalty that finally sealed the Town's fate was rather a harsh decision.

It happened seven minutes from the end when Pearson raced through. The Town right flank was beaten, and Roberts rushed across to make a tackle

before the outside-left could shoot.

He charged Pearson and got the ball away, and although it was a robust tackle, the Newcastle man was not knocked over. However, the referee pointed to the spot without hesitation, and would not listen to appeals by the Town players.

PEARSON MADE NO MISTAKE

Many worse things than this had been allowed to pass, and it was bad luck for the Town skipper. PEARSON took the kick, and he made no mistake with a terrific shot that gave Coen no chance.

This did spur on the Town to make a final effort for a goal, and in the next minute I thought they should have had a penalty when Carroll was badly "cut up" when he had weaved his way through.

The game itself was far from satisfactory and there was a deal of the end of the season atmosphere about it. Luton missed their opportunity in the first half, and they should have had a lead of a couple of goals at the interval.

Afterwards, the chances did not come their way, and once they got in front Newcastle relied completely on spoiling Luton play their usual game after the interval and the marking was very close.

The crowd behind the Town goal became very restive during one period of the second half and began to throw missiles on to the field. This seems to be becoming a favourite pastime with many football crowds.

A DISAPPOINTING RESULT

All-in-all it was a disappointing result from the Luton point of view. We had hoped for victory, but it is asking a lot of any team to go on the field away from home with the knowledge that they cannot afford to drop even one point.

The Town team as a whole has often played better this season, but the fact that a goal eluded them for so long, and then the unexpected success of Newcastle, seemed to throw them completely off their balance.

Newcastle had obviously given a good deal of thought to the tactics to be adopted in this match, and I was told that Gordon was included specifically to see that Connelly did no damage.

The inside left was made captain for the day, and did what was required of him by winning the toss. However, his general play was below his best.

For one thing, he was not allowed to play his usual game, for Gordon marked him very closely, and, in fact, scarcely left him throughout the afternoon.

When Connelly did get clear of his "shadow," he invariably spoilt his work by trying to be too clever and attempting too much.

Redfern, too, was bitten by the same "bug," though it was not so pronounced as in the case of Connelly. He did much that was useful, especially in the first half, but was no better than the others in the region of the goal.

BILLINGTON WAS UNLUCKY

Billington proved more than Denmark could handle in the first half, and he led the line with plenty of dash and spirit. More than one of his shots deserved to score.

After the interval, however, Denmark got on top, and the centre-forward had few opportunities.

During this period, Billington was not so direct as he is usually, and was inclined to keep the ball too close at times. Still, he got few low passes, and for the most part, with the ball in the air, was at a disadvantage against the tall Denmark.

Neither wingman received his fair share of the ball, and each suffered from lack of support. Carroll had the better service, and usually managed to make good use of the material.

WINGERS DESERVED BETTER SUPPORT

Some of his centres were beautifully made, and he showed that he had the beating of Ancell. With better support, he might have been a real danger, and the same applied to Stephenson, who was always menacing the home goal when he was sent through with a clear field.

The halves were not the driving force they have been in previous matches, and although there was nothing wrong with their defensive work, they had their limitations as an attacking force.

Both Finlayson and Roberts were rare triers, but they did not bring the ball through so often as usual. Dreyer was often troubled by the nippy Frost, who was always a potential danger.

However, the centre-half held his own very well, and saw to it that the centre-forward did not get many chances to shoot.

DEFENCE WAS STEADY ENOUGH

The defence as a whole was steady enough, and King and Dunsmore came through well. Both kept a close watch on Birkett and Pearson, two clever, direct wingers.

Dunsmore's hard tackling was not to the liking of the home forwards, and he was spoken to by the referee on two occasions. It is a pity that he gives away so many free kicks, and it was unfortunate that one should be the cause of the first goal.

His kicking was first rate, and King was equally good in this respect. Coen had no chance at all with either goal, and when the first was scored, I think he was unsighted. In any case, the ball was well out of his reach.

He made two or three wonderful saves in the first half, and there is no call for criticism in this department.