

EFFECT OF THE CHANGES

Last Game At Luton

(By CRUSADER)

LUTON TOWN 1

Stephenson

COVENTRY CITY 3

Lager 2, Coen

LUTON: Mayberry; King, Dunsmore; Finlayson, Strathie, Roberts; Burgess, Redfern, Billington, Connelly, Stephenson.

COVENTRY: Morgan; Astley, Elliott; Frith, Mason, Boileau; Ashall, Green, Crawley, Lager, Coen.

Referee: G. C. Denton, Northampton.

We have four months or thereabouts to recover from the disappointment, for while it was the end of the season the supporters wanted to win this match just as much as any. So did the players. The big question was whether the directors wanted a win. Had Luton beaten Coventry, each player would have received a talent bonus of £10 in addition to the ordinary bonus; quite a large section of the crowd came to the conclusion that it was simply to save this sum that the changes were made in the team.

It will be unpopular to say that such a statement is not accurate, but I am going to say so. Not that I would say there was as much anxiety to win this game as there was to win against Millwall last month, but I should imagine, though I have not spoken to anyone about it at the moment of writing, that the official attitude was summed up in the view that the club could do with the money if the match were lost, but would pay it if necessary.

THE CHANGES

I am quite sure that if Neil McBain had felt that the game would be lost through the inclusion of any one player he would not have altered the team at all. We cannot say anything about Burgess. He played quite well. Mayberry—well, quite a lot of people discussed the goals, and I heard him blamed first for failing to stop the first scoring shot, but exonerated about the other two; then exonerated over the first shot and blamed for the other two.

Personally I do not think he had an earthly chance with any shot that beat him. In every instance he adopted the right course in advancing, but what hope has a goalkeeper who is not covered at all by colleagues when he has to dash out and meet opponents? All that had to happen in every instance was that the player in possession simply had to shoot past him. In the first case the ball was sent across as he attempted to advance, and an unmarked player shot through.

HOPELESS

In the second instance the shot was always going right away from him, and I am of opinion that he was unsighted and knew nothing about it until the ball had beaten him. The third goal found him in the extraordinary position of having to race out to the right wing to meet an opponent who had all the time he needed, and it was a simple matter to lift the ball to the centre before Mayberry was within striking distance.

Mayberry is a good goalkeeper; any one who could have prevented such goals as these off his own bat would be too good for football; he is wanted for bigger problems.

THE CENTRE-HALF

Then we come to Strathie, whole-hearted, eager to do the right thing, and I should imagine he is one of the most reliable fellows in the game in the matter of conduct. This player came to Luton two seasons ago as a centre-half; sometimes he has played splendidly with the Reserves, and without discussing the matter with any official it seemed obvious that unless he could be given a game to prove his worth, especially as he is not among the players

retained, this was the only game in which it could be done.

Had he been played earlier, the cry would have gone forth with even greater emphasis than it has done that the directors were deliberately turning down the promotion chance. So what was to be done? Had the player to have a chance or not? He had it, and I hate to say it about a player who is so honestly worth encouragement, he was unfortunate. I would not blame him alone for the goals, but there was not the understanding in defence we have seen recently, nor could it be expected.

OTHERS

For the rest, I must add that King and Dunsmore—though affected by the epidemic of rough play—were good enough individually, as also were Finlayson and Roberts, while in the attack Connelly again did some most entertaining work. Some of his touches were nothing short of genius, and yet it did not get us much. Redfern, too, was on a par, but just could not touch lucky with a shot, nor could Billington, who also showed that Mason could be beaten, but to beat both Mason and Morgan was another proposition. Stephenson again played splendidly, and Burgess gave further proof that he will make good.

The City owed almost everything to Morgan and Mason. The former was blessed with some good fortune, but he also earned it. Mason was a grand pivot, and Astley was a splendid back, clean and fair in his tackles, but the same could not always be said of Elliott, nor for that matter of Frith and Boileau. The former is a fine player. Ashall was a tricky and clever winger, and Coen also did well, while Lager has improved tremendously, but his would have been among the names in the black book had I been referee.

And having mentioned the official, I am showing great restraint when I say that he seems unfortunate at Luton, or we are unfortunate when he turns up, and it should be enough to say that I hope next season he will have shown vast improvement.

THE GOALS

First goal came within a minute. The Town defence was unsettled; there was some loose play on the left wing; Ashall took advantage of it to slip through and send the ball into the middle which was vacant save for LAGER, who seized the ball, went on unharassed and then shot the ball right away from Mayberry into the net.

Similar marks nearly came in quick succession because of the lack of cover in defence, and Ashall was selfish once, and Coen unlucky. The Town, however, showed their guests how football should be played, and they repeatedly swept through with close combination and dainty footwork, but all to no purpose against a rugged defence, and at half-time the equaliser was still awaited.

The second half found the Town in similar mood, and Coventry adhered to their close work in defence and open play forward. Result was that the right wing made a raid, and although the first danger seemed to be broken, the ball went out to COEN, who shot at once, and Mayberry was again left to fish the ball out of the net.

More pressure by the Town and another raid by the Coventry right-winger, and this time he sent the ball again to the vacant space in the middle, and LAGER was there again to shoot into the empty goal.

Strenuously the Town forwards and flank halves worked, and the visitors were chasing the ball and opponents all over the place, but it was not until STEPHENSON put in a tremendous first-time shot that Morgan was beaten, and this was the grandest shot of the game. The Town had plenty of other shots, but with the exception of Connelly's cleverly-placed effort, which struck the bar, Morgan and his colleagues were able to keep out everything