

THE LUTON STORY

51/52
(FAC)
Saturday, 8th March, 1952.

LUTON TOWN TEAM: Streten; Cooke, Aherne; Morton, Owen, Watkins; Davies, Taylor, J., Moore, Stobbart, Mitchell.

ARSENAL TEAM: Swindin; Barnes, Smith, L.; Shaw, Daniel, Mercer; Cox, Milton, Goring, Lishman, Roper.

REFEREE: Mr. R. J. Leafe (Nottingham).

RESULT: Luton Town 2, Arsenal 3.

The record crowd of 28,433 saw this match start in sunshine on a pitch which looked remarkably good, considering the torrents of rain which had fallen on it in the previous few days, but which, it was obvious before the game was half over, became sticky and very tiring to all the players.

From the kick-off it was obvious that Luton were going all out for a quick goal, a tactical move which practically every team tries when they play Arsenal; for is it not said that an early goal in a Cup-tie gives a team that confidence which is necessary for a win? In this Luton Town succeeded where three other teams have failed in this season's Cup-ties.

It was in the ninth minute that MOORE threw himself at a Mitchell centre to head home a spectacular and opportunist goal to put the home side ahead before most people had settled down to the game. This was Cup football indeed.

Just before, Cox had forced a corner on his own side of the field and Goring had headed only just wide, whilst Milton had been beaten in a race for the ball by Streten.

Following the goal, Luton put on pressure that could have spelt further disaster for Arsenal, especially when several defenders mis-kicked and sliced the muddy ball. Lishman had settled down to the conditions rather faster than Milton, but Jimmy Logie's substitute was very near when he raced after a long up-field pass by Cox, only to have his shot blocked by Aherne, who conceded a corner in doing so. Milton tried a twenty-yard shot for goal soon after, which was confidently collected and cleared by Streten.

Slowly the Arsenal defence settled down after the initial shock, but the fact that the front line was not working with its usual cohesion placed an undue amount of work on them. Everyone was fighting hard, but things were just not quite going according to plan.

Twice before the interval Luton looked like increasing their lead, largely due to the drive and skill of Stobbart and Taylor, then Mitchell was let through with a good chance, but George Swindin came out in his typical style to smother his eventual shot. Luton Town well deserved their half-time lead, and during the interval most of the spectators present must have thought that unless the Arsenal forward line could get moving together in the second half, the home team were likely to make their first appearance in a Semi-final.

Half-Time: Luton Town, 1; Arsenal, 0

When Arsenal lined up to kick-off in the second half, it was noticed that the forward line had been re-shuffled so that Milton went to outside-right, Goring inside-right, Roper to the centre, and Cox to outside-left, Lishman retaining his usual position.

This made all the difference to Arsenal's hitting force, and it was only a few minutes before Lishman headed into the home net, only to be ruled off-side in a border-line decision. It was only fifteen minutes, however, before Roper made a fine opening by switching down the left wing and giving Freddie Cox a through pass. It was a very narrow angle, and it seemed impossible that he could score, but COX sent in a strong shot, which went into the goal between Streten and the near post.



JOE MERCER

... Architect of
the recovery ...
Well done Joe!



FREDDIE COX

... two great
goals and the
pass for a third

Owen was limping as a result of an injury, and was having difficulty in getting up to the ball, and when Davies was carried from the field with a suspected fracture of the ankle following a collision with Lionel Smith, their fighting force naturally weakened.

Soon after Davies left, Pete Goring nearly gave Arsenal the lead when he sent in a left foot half-volley which Streten did very well to save. The eventual goal which gave Arsenal the lead found Streten wanting for the first time in the game. This was in the 72nd minute of the game, and COX cut in from the wing and shot again from a narrow angle. This time, however, the ball passed clear of Streten and went in between him and the far post.

Two minutes later MILTON put Arsenal further ahead by converting a cross from Cox after some grand spadework by Roper, who had worked like a man possessed throughout the game. Two minutes again and Luton were on the attack and a penalty was awarded to the home side for a handled ball in the Arsenal penalty area. MITCHELL converted the spot kick.

This brought life back into the game again when all seemed to be over, and the remaining fifteen minutes was filled with the excitement which makes Cup-tie football what it is.

TWO OF THE THREE AT LUTON



It's that man again! A number of hearts which almost stopped beating at Tottenham two years ago and were kept going by Freddie Cox, were indebted to him again at Luton. Goal No. 1 has gone in. This is Freddie's second.



Again in a sitting position, but his job is done. Arthur Milton has fastened on to a pass from Cox, and the ball is in the net for the third goal. (The goal that shook us, see page 12.)