

ENGLAND NEED MATTHEWS AND 4 NEW FORWARDS

Team "Without Ideas" Beat Ireland

From FRANK COLES

LIVERPOOL, Wednesday.

England 3 Ireland 1

THE England team can book their passage to Switzerland next summer. Success over Ireland at Goodison Park this afternoon ensured their appearance in the World Cup series in June and installed them favourites to win the 1953-54 home international championship.

Scotland, with three points out of four, are the sole challengers and a draw at Hampden Park, Glasgow, on April 3 would be sufficient to give England the title they last won outright four seasons ago.

But England have more important fish to fry in the immediate future. To-day fortnight they meet the challenge of Hungary, the Olympic champions, at Wembley and with this big test in mind the form of every player from Merrick to Mullen was put under the microscope this afternoon.

The verdict, I regret to record, is that if the selectors decided to put to-day's team in the field they would be asking for trouble.

A 3-1 win over Ireland has a most comfortable "look," but in a long experience I have never seen any national side so completely bereft of ideas as England were in the first half to-day.

PRESENTATION GOAL

And to reflect that they began by being literally presented with the lead owing to an appalling blunder by Ireland's goalkeeper in the first half minute! That incident I will describe later. But here they were a goal up before anyone really had the feel of the ball.

Attack was to be the theme song of this match, the stepping stone to the greater occasion at Wembley a fortnight hence. We sat back and waited for the oil to work into the machinery, for the England forwards to move smoothly from sweet rhythm to overwhelming mastery. It never happened.

There were ominous bolts in the knees. The so-called attacking machine creaked, and much to everyone's astonishment the Irishmen, forgetting their tragic start, showed us

RUNCORN OUT OF CUP

Witton Albion were yesterday awarded the F.A. Cup qualifying tie which was abandoned after 31 minutes on Saturday when Runcorn refused to restart the match after a disputed goal.

Runcorn, who said the shot which gave Witton a 2-0 lead had gone through the side netting, were fined £50. Quoting Rule 28, they protested that the referee would not agree to repair the net before restarting the game.

Witton receive Nelson in the First Round on Saturday week.

the real football—speed off the mark, the run into the open space, and above all the ability to pass the ball to a colleague instead of crashing it wildly against an opponent.

England showed some improvement in the second half, but they must be judged on that lifeless, purposeless first half, during which the only forward worthy of consideration for the Hungary match was our old friend Matthews.

He started badly. For 10 minutes he scarcely got a touch of the ball and when he did the magic tricks refused to function. But he was quick to realise that young Quixall was out of his depth and that he might as well have sighed for the moon as to expect a defence-splitting pass.

So we saw a different Matthews, a forager and a fighter, turning up here, there and anywhere in his quest of the ball. He even took the chance of appearing on the scoring list.

Those who know their Matthews really well will be surprised to read that early in the second half, a couple of minutes after Ireland had equalised and were threatening to take charge, he made the best shot of the match—a 25-yard pleydriver with his left foot that took the paint off the cross-bar.

LOFTHOUSE HURT

Builders of the attack to oppose Hungary must come to a full stop after Matthews on to-day's showing. Quixall has all the promise of developing into a fine footballer, but he is still in the development stage. At present he lacks the confidence of the mature player to draw an opponent, beat him to the tackle and give life to an attacking move.

Lofthouse also failed to pass the test. He was handicapped early in the second half through a leg injury—a pulled muscle which may keep him out of the game for some time—and then a quarter of an hour from time he suffered a badly cut eye while heading through England's third and last goal.

It was Lofthouse's first-half display that was so disappointing. He never beat the attack together and rarely grounded the ball in the air or on the well. His reply to criticisms might have been that he received no support from a failure or Hassall, who was also simply left Mullen and inside forwards to play him out.

These left Mullen and inside forwards to play him out.

INTERNATIONAL TABLE

	P.	W.	D.	L.	F.	A.	Pts.
England ..	2	2	0	0	7	2	4
Scotland ..	2	1	1	0	6	4	3
Wales ..	2	0	1	1	4	7	1
Ireland ..	2	0	0	2	2	6	0

of the team. Towards the end, when Ireland had lost their goalkeeper and much of their fighting spirit, Mullen looked like an international winger, but his first-half performance was without fire and imagination.

So, as I visualise the situation to-night, England need Matthews and four new forwards for the next test. My line would read: Matthews, Taylor, and Mortensen (all Blackpool!), Finney and Robb, who has improved immensely and has 10 League goals in his bag.

For Mortensen I expect the selectors will say, "Read Allen." Three Blackpool forwards and Harry Johnston at centre-half would be almost unheard of, though I am old enough to remember that when Italy participated in the "Battle of Highbury" in 1934 Arsenal supplied seven of England's team.

FAULTS IN DEFENCE

To-day's defence could go in again, though there are critics of Billy Wright's indifferent passing, of Eckersley's inclination to lose positional sense, and of the newcomer Rickaby, who is slow in recovery. I would recall Ramsey at right-back, if only for the telling use he makes of the ball.

If any side was given the chance to step straight into top gear it was England to-day. They were given a goal when Smyth, the unfortunate Irish goalkeeper, allowed a harmless-looking low shot by Hassall to slip out of his grasp in the first 30 seconds.

There was no real pace behind Hassall's kick, but Smyth fumbled, got himself into an unbelievable tangle, and the ball slid lazily over the line as though ashamed of itself.

But it was Ireland, fighting like heroes, with Bingham and McMorran, the plucky flying raiders, who proceeded to take charge. Quick as lightning on the ball, they gave England a lesson in attacking football and my notebook records brilliant drives by Bingham, McMorran and McIlroy which deserved at least to put Ireland level.

Belated justice was done when eight minutes after the interval Bingham centred, and McMorran, outjumping Wright in the penalty area, "connected" with his head. The ball sped low to the surprised Merrick's left. He got his fingers to it but could only push it against the post and so into the net.

England regained the lead eight minutes later when Matthews, cutting inside again, gave to Wright. From Wright a lofted pass fell invitingly on Hassall's head. He judged the right moment to a split second and the ball curled gracefully out of Smyth's reach.

SMYTH CARRIED OFF

Lofthouse's goal arrived a quarter of an hour from the end. For once Mullen crossed a beautifully accurate ball and Lofthouse met it with his head as Dickson challenged. It was a goal all the way, but Lofthouse paid dearly for the effort. He collapsed with a badly cut left eye and was led off the field.

Almost at once, Ireland's goalkeeper, who is never likely to forget the nightmare of this match, was also in the wars. He went down to save a fierce low drive from Matthews, and Mullen, dashing in to tackle, accidentally kicked him in the face. He was carried off on a stretcher with a broken nose.

ENGLAND: Merrick (Birmingham); Rickaby (West Bromwich); Eckersley (Blackburn); Wright (Wolverhampton); Johnston (Blackpool); Dickinson (Portsmouth); Matthews (Blackpool); Quixall (Sheffield Wednesday); Lofthouse (Bolton); Hassall (Bolton); Mullen (Wolverhampton).

IRELAND: Smyth (Distillery); Graham (Doncaster); McMichael (Newcastle); Blanchflower (Aston Villa); Dickson (Arsenal); Cush (Glenavon); Bingham (Sunderland); McIlroy (Burnley); Simpson (Glasgow Rangers); McMorran (Doncaster); Lockhart (Aston Villa).

Referee: Mr. E. E. Smith (Wales).

Moscow's Good Wishes

Moscow radio, in an English language transmission yesterday, broadcast an interview with Mr. S. Savin, Soviet vice-president of the International Football Association, on his recent visit to London.

Referring to the match between England and the Rest of the World, he said: "We were amazed by the seemingly tireless energy, skill and tactical mastery of that most popular English outside-right Stanley Matthews."

"The game between Arsenal and Charlton we saw on October 24th was excellent and a pleasure to watch. Arsenal were in good form. We felt a bit sorry for Charlton."

"I hope close friendship will be built between the British and Soviet footballers. I wish British and their fans all the best."



MERRICK, the reliable England goalkeeper, takes the ball out of the air as Bingham, Ireland's right wing, attempts to head a goal.

PINNACLES