

LUTON FOOTBALL NOTES.

By "The Goalie."

SOUTHERN LEAGUE.

EXETER'S PLUCKY RALLY.

BROWN'S BRILLIANCE.

A remarkable game was seen on the Luton ground on Saturday, when Exeter were defeated by 4-2. It was one of those games which emphasise the glorious uncertainties of football, for at one point Luton, with a lead of two goals, looked like winning by a large margin. Then Exeter rallied, and two successful shots robbed Luton of their lead. When the crowd had become reconciled to a draw or defeat, the home team pulled themselves together and scored twice in the closing stages. Luton deserved to win, and should have made victory certain in the first half, when they had all the game. Exeter gave a very plucky display, and if they had not wavered before Luton's final assault, they would probably have snatched a surprise victory.

As Southampton lost, they fell below Luton on Saturday, the Blues thus being fifth from the bottom. New Brompton are doing so badly that they seem certain to retain the last place, and on the present showing Leyton will have hard work not to keep them company. Luton have not lost a Southern League match since December 9th, their six matches producing three victories and three drawn games, while the last three games have been won outright with a score of eight goals to two. How long this is going to be kept up is more than I dare prophesy. To-morrow there is sure to be a stiff game at Coventry, for the latter are playing a good game just now, and a draw is about as much as can reasonably be expected. After that we receive a visit from Brentford and then go to Leyton, so that Luton should still continue to gather in points and make their position as secure as possible.

One of the features of Saturday's game was the brilliance of Ernie Brown, who, in addition to finding the net himself at a stage when a goal was very much wanted, had a hand in the other three, which all came from his brilliant centres. When he is in form Ernie can swing the ball in so that his colleagues can just divert it with their heads, and when Brown is in form Moody's name generally appears among the goal scorers. The three inside forwards all played well, and Streeton is rapidly developing into a valuable centre. Though not in such brilliant form as he has shown in former games this season Bob Hawkes gave a fine display, and at one point, when Bob had beaten no less than six men one after the other, one of the spectators summed up the situation by calling out "That's the way for one man to play a whole team." The Luton defence showed a tendency to waver under a sustained pressure, and for twenty minutes in the second half had a very bad time of it. The ground was naturally in a deplorable condition, but the players on both sides rose to the occasion, and a rather good game resulted.

At the start the home forwards showed superior combination, and the Exeter backs looked like wavering on several occasions. Fred Hawkes skimmed the bar with a brilliant shot, and Whitaker also had to save from Brown. A corner followed, and Evans saved a dangerous situation by kicking the ball just over his own goal. From the resultant corner Walker had the bad luck to head against the bar. During one tight corner, Watson, who ran through, and Cornan might have scored for Exeter, but finesse failed where dash would probably have succeeded. Luton then set up a strong attack again, and Bushell set Brown going with a beautiful pass, and racing past the back Ernie put in a perfect centre, which Moody cleverly headed in. This success occurred about thirteen minutes from the start, and was thoroughly deserved on the run of play. For two minutes after the ball had been kicked off again, Exeter looked like making good, but it was only a flash in the pan, and soon some more grand work by Brown saw Luton again swarming round the goalkeeper.

Whittaker was well covered by his backs, however, and the best shot he had for some time was a fine drive by Bob Hawkes. The visitors made one of their rare raids into Luton's territory, and Cornan shot wide. Much better attempts were seen at the other end, where Walker, Streeton, Bushell and Stansfield went very near scoring. The prevalence of offside somewhat marred the game at this point, and Luton became less effective through abandoning long for short passing. Exeter were still out of the picture though, and the home team allowed many openings to go begging, while on one occasion Moody slipped when shooting from close range, and thus lost a certain goal. The second goal was bound to come sooner or later, and after half an hour's play Moody again headed through from Brown's centre, this goal being a replica of the first. Half-time thus found Luton deservedly leaving by 2-0.

Exeter resumed without their outside right, Parnell, who was troubled by an old injury, but strangely enough, with four forwards, the visitors had practically all the play. Luton had a very bad twenty minutes during which they lost the lead and well nigh found themselves in arrears. Only spasmodic runs by the homesters, during one of which Moody nearly scored, relieved Exeter's attack, and the visiting forwards were constantly harassing the Luton backs, who at last faltered under the pressure, and allowed Lockett to score. Naisby came out of goal as a last resource, but the inside right shot past him with a very fine cross-shot.

This woke Luton up and Whittaker had one or two nasty shots to save, while they also succeeded in gaining a corner, but after this the Blues retired into their shell again, and Garside equalised with a shot which struck Naisby's foot and rebounded into the net. So weak were the Luton backs after this that Exeter might have easily obtained the lead, the home team being practically penned in. It was not until about a quarter of an hour from the finish that Luton recovered, and then they set to work in earnest. The game was full of incident, and about ten minutes remained to play, when, following on a free kick, Ernie Brown capped his sterling exhibition throughout the game by driving the ball through a press of players over Whittaker's outstretched hands. No sooner had the cheering died down than Streeton touched a flying centre from Brown and flashed the ball into the net. Both ends were visited during the closing stages, but Exeter had lost heart, and time came with the score:—

LUTON 4, EXETER 2.