

TOO LATE?

Blues' Brilliant Wind-up of Home Programme.

FUTURE OF LUTON TOWN FOOTBALL.

By "Vigilant."

Saturday afternoon saw the ringing down of the curtain upon first division Southern League football at Luton, not merely for this season, but in all probability for something like sixteen months at the very least. Notwithstanding weather conditions so glorious as to be associated more with the height of summer than the end of April, except for the fact that they were typical of the good fortune which invariably favours the Cup Final day, not more than four thousand folks turned up for the finale. The explanation was that one was forced to recognise Luton had left it too late to escape from their predicament by anything they themselves might accomplish. Their fate rested, and rests still, to a large extent, upon results they can do nothing to influence, and such being the case it was downright irony to find the Blues illuminating a forlorn hope with a performance that easily eclipsed all previous records for the season.

With Walden and Streeton still incapacitated, and Lashbrooke having finished his season, Luton played Mardle, the ruddy-haired Bedfordian, in the centre, and Moody returned to the left wing as Stephenson's partner, and the Reserve player led the forward line with such dash and abandon that the Blues were in a mood that was simply irresistible. Any one ignorant of football facts would scarcely have credited that this brilliant side had won only eight League games during the season, for they made rings round the Reading team in such a fashion as to set one wondering however the Biscuit men could have beaten Aston Villa and drawn with Manchester United in the Cup competition. There was, of course, one potent factor in that Reading have parted with their brilliant custodian, Caldwell, to Everton. They received £450 for him, and on Saturday they were forced to appreciate the loss they have sustained.

In place of the goalkeeper they have signed on in Caldwell's place, they decided at the last moment to rely on their reserve custodian, Caulfield, and he turned out a poor substitute for the player on whom they had been accustomed to rely at the last line of defence.

For all that, Luton certainly exhibited form in keeping with the weather during the first half, when wind and sun favoured them. The defence made light of the Reading forward work, and, thanks to the work of Mardle, Moody, and Stephenson, nearly all the play was at the visitors' end. In the first few minutes, Caulfield allowed a shot from Moody to slip over his outstretched arms, a misunderstanding between the goalkeeper and Gibson, the left back, nearly let Mardle through, Moody headed over with an open goal, and Stephenson shivered the cross-bar with a wonderful drive. A quarter of an hour had gone when fine work by Bushell and Stephenson provided Mardle with an easy No. 2, and with the goalkeeper fumbling a header from Mardle, Moody made Luton's lead three. Once the goalkeeper did brilliantly in saving from Moody, but he shaped weakly whenever rushed, and it was due to this that Mardle bundled him off and shot into an open net, while, later, Moody headed in after a weak save from Stephenson.

Reading improved after the change of ends, but the play was really very tame, until first Bushell and then Brown scored goals that could not possibly have been saved. Luton were always on top for the rest of the game, and Naisby had a soft job in goal. He had but three shots to handle in the first half, and only two dangerous ones came his way after the change of ends, until in the last minute the referee gave a penalty against Potts—for what, it was difficult to understand—and Foster scored well. Thus the final was: Luton 7, Reading 1.