

FOOTBALL.

SOUTHERN LEAGUE.

LUTON'S TWO INGLORIOUS DISPLAYS.

Unless something unexpected happens, Luton will find themselves again fighting in the Second Division next season. Following on their poor but successful display against Southampton last week, they visited West Ham on Saturday, and were well beaten by three goals to love, and on Wednesday they allowed Queen's Park Rangers, a team who had lost all their previous games, to beat them on their own ground. The only thing to be said in their favour is that on neither occasion were they at full strength. Johnson played instead of Frith on Saturday, but the defeat must not be put down to him, for he worked as hard and well as any man in the team. Mitchell covered himself with glory and by a brilliant exhibition kept his lines clear until the interval. The constant pressure exerted by the West Ham forwards, however, was bound to tell, and in the second half Puddephatt scored twice and Hilsdon once.

On Wednesday Luton's strength was more seriously depleted by the fact that not one of their regular half-backs were able to play through injuries. The two Hawkes' and Frith all had leg trouble, and in addition to that Johnson had not recovered from an injury at West Ham. Under the circumstances Wilson had to go centre-half, Needham played on the left and Dunn on the right. However good Wilson may be as a wing half he is miles below his best form in the centre, and Dunn was absolutely unfitted to the unusual position in which he was placed. The result was that the half-back line offered no resistance at all, and Queen's Park Rangers, who seem to have one of the poorest teams that have ever worn their colours, romped home.

It was simply a case of a poor team beating a poorer one. The visitors have little cohesion, but some of their players have individual brilliance, notably Donald, the outside-left, and Miller, the centre-forward. So crude was the football on occasions that the crowd roared with laughter, and everyone must have been glad when the final whistle blew. Luton's forwards, of whom so much was expected, were exceedingly disappointing. Of course they suffered from the lack of support of the middle line, but even when they did get the ball they frittered their chances away. Roberts and Hoar might have done well if they had had the passes, but these were few and far between, but generally badly directed.

The game does not need much description. The Rangers secured a lead by half-time, which they deserved on the run of play, Donald scoring after beating Elvey. They would have been in an even better position but for a superb display of goal-keeping by Mitchell, and some good defensive work by Elvey. These two players were also the outstanding men in the second half, but Birch put the Rangers further ahead. After this Luton showed their best form of the match, and Hoar scored a good goal from a pass by Robinson, but Miller was able to put Queen's Park further ahead a minute or so later through Robinson unsighting the goalkeeper, while Gregory practically put the issue beyond doubt by scoring the fourth goal. Luton then had a huge slice of luck. The referee adjudged a mild case of handling to have occurred in the penalty area. Even the home partisans thought it occurred outside, but the official apparently had the support of one of his linesmen, and Wilson scored. This put new life into Luton, and Simms had an easy opening, but he missed badly. A goal at this stage would have given Luton a sporting chance, as the light made it very difficult for the goalkeepers, but the forwards never looked like succeeding, and Queen's Park won by four goals to two.