

FOOTBALL NOTES AND NEWS.

By "Vigilant."

TWO SOUTHERN LEAGUE DEFEATS.

For the second time this season Luton Town have had the opportunity of going to the head of the Southern League table, and have failed to grasp it by sustaining an unexpected defeat at home. Against Reading on Wednesday, they made three changes from the side which did so well at Gillingham. Frith returned to centre-half after a fortnight's absence, and this caused Johnson to transfer to left-half, and so give Bob Hawkes another rest, while Roe was tried at inside-right to give Wileman a chance of resting his old knee injury. These changes cannot be said to have made for marked improvement, but still the Blues' display as a whole was an advance on their form in previous home matches, and Reading, with the same side that beat Croydon Common 4-1 the previous Saturday, were more than a trifle lucky to win by the odd goal in three. They had the more powerful pair of backs to help them in attack by their strong kicking, the more resolute and methodical set of halves, and the more rousing and aggressive line of forwards, and yet for the greater half of a game which contained far more incident than scientific football, Luton had the match in their hands and only required decisive work on the part of their forwards near goal to push home a winning advantage. The failure of the forwards in this respect was an important factor in the Blues' defeat, and another was the fairly pronounced weakness which again prevailed in the half-back line, but there was still a third factor which was not a failing, but a misfortune—and that was a goal which should never have been scored, and in any case should never have been allowed to count.

It occurred about twenty minutes after the start after both goals had had very narrow escapes, and both sides had thrown away fairly soft chances. The ball was driven into the goal mouth by Comrie, the right-half, with a lofty lunge, and Elvey essayed to keep off Chorley, the inside-left, while Mitchell took the ball, but he failed to delay the Reading man sufficiently long, and as Mitchell reached up to take the ball from the bounce, Chorley disturbed him, and the ball just touched the goalkeeper's hand and bounced off into the net. It cannot be said that Mitchell at any time shaped very convincingly at the ball, but the point should certainly not have been allowed because he never had the opportunity to hold the ball, and it was not until after he had been jostled off that he even touched it. Apart from this, there remains the fact that before the scoring of the goal the linesman on the side of the field from which the play came was frantically waving his flag in a futile endeavour to draw the referee's attention to some breach of the laws which would have operated in Luton's favour.

This was the only score at half-time, but it was not due to Mitchell because he was beaten, and had very lucky escapes at least twice. Luton, on the other hand, had the chances to equalise, but the nearest they came was when a punt from Robinson, bouncing in front of goal, drove the Reading goalkeeper so far back that it was claimed he carried the ball over the line in clearing. Three gilt-edged chances were thrown away in the first five minutes of the second-half. Lindley ran clean through to send behind with three inside forwards having the goal at their mercy, and then Simms

and Roberts successfully rushed the back, and the centre shot straight at the helpless goalkeeper while Roe did ditto from the rebound. It was a free-kick beautifully placed by Roberts that enabled Rollinson to head a typical Bert Moody goal and equalise with half an hour to go. Just at this stage of the game the Blues seemed to have got their opponents well beaten, but time after time they got to a certain point only to fall away, and their work in front of goal gave no promise of a lead except on one occasion when Simms was thrown off a centre from Roberts in such a way that it was a surprise to see the referee refrain from pointing to the penalty spot. Reading were far more dangerous, their forward work being particularly lively, and thirteen minutes from the end a muddle up on the part of Frith and Robinson enabled them to score the winning goal. When Stevens centred from the line there was an appeal that the ball had gone over the line, but the referee did not entertain it, and with Foster backing it with his head to the left Chorley had no difficulty in heading in.

The great advantage Reading possessed over Luton was that there was altogether more life and decision about their work, and although the Blues did not deserve to lose they would do well to emulate the game favoured by Reading, of swinging the ball about freely and taking first-time chances. None of the home forwards did anything great, although both Simms and Lindley started very strongly, but the line might have been altogether more effective if Roberts had not so consistently been called upon to act the role of spectator. This was not the fault of Roe, who made quite a promising debut at inside-right, and wants only a little more resolution near goal to force home the valuable work he is capable of in a quiet way in mid-field. The half-back line missed Bob Hawkes, for Johnson favouring the centre position could not restrain a desire to roam in that direction, and he was often of great value there because Frith did no better than in the game with Queen's Park Rangers. Fred Hawkes got through a lot of work but he and Johnson could not prevent a great deal of pressure being brought to bear upon the backs, and both Elvey and Robinson showed fine form, the latter doing better than in any previous game this season.