

FROM THE FOOTBALL FIELD.

LUTON'S BEST PERFORMANCE OF THE SEASON.

As a result of the decided improvement in the "Blues" recent displays the visit to Northampton on Saturday aroused something approaching pre-war interest for in no away match this season have the players enjoyed the vocal encouragement of their supporters to anything like the extent they did on Saturday. As a matter of fact at the times the "music" on the stand, provided as it was by means of bells and rattles was rather a nuisance to the "Cobblers" supporters, but they bore it philosophically and were quite prepared to admit the superiority of the visiting side. Notwithstanding the Rugby Club were playing at home and the day was not at all an ideal one from the point of view of the spectators, the "Cobblers" had their record gate of the present season. The stand itself was rather uncomfortably crowded, but the chief drawback on this account arose on the far side which is not generally used except on big days, and when special arrangements are made to keep the spectators in bound. On Saturday the crowd took French leave and overran this side of the pitch, and as there was not even a rope to separate them from the players they often got mixed up with the players, and the referee had rather a troublesome task to keep the game going. Several times the crowd encroached well over the touch-line, and from the stand it was impossible to see the corner flag when there was pressure on either goal.

The teams as selected were unaltered from the previous week, when both clubs confounded the prophets by winning against presumably stronger sides. But Luton were compelled to make a change as Sid Hoar was not available. Although he is expected home for good during the present week he could not get away on Saturday. Grimes has not altogether been a success, and it was decided to introduce Tomlinson again and bring Roe on the extreme wing, and certainly the experiment worked all

right. The teams were constituted as follows: Luton—Summers; Elvey, Dunn; Urwin, Rutherford, Parker; Roe, Tomlinson, Simms, Williams and Bookman. Northampton—Thorpe; Clipstone, Sproston; Manning, Orndon, Tomkins; Pease, Dickens, Whitworth, Lockett and Freeman. Referee, Mr. S. H. Harris (London). Luton started the game, and after they had run the ball out Freeman secured from the throw-in, and, rounding Elvey somewhat easily, centred for Lockett to try a shot which Summers fisted straight up while standing a yard or so wide of the goal. As the ball dropped nicely in front Dickens had the easiest chance possible, and naturally took advantage of his unexpected good fortune. It was more or less a fluke, but this misfortune did not upset the "Blues," and they set out to remedy matters in a most encouraging style. Rutherford almost did the trick with a grand dropping shot, which, however, landed on top of the net with Thorpe well beaten. Luton were again very unlucky when Thorpe managed to clear at the expense of a corner from Bookman while a few minutes later, Roe, taking a pass from Bookman, let drive in great style, only to have the ill-luck to hit the upright. Still it was all Luton's game at this point and twenty minutes from the start the equaliser came.

Bookman screwed the goal from the goal-line a few yards wide of goal and tipped it across the goalmouth where Simms and Tomlinson were standing dangerously near offside if the pass had come from any other position than the actual goal-line. Simms seemed the one likely to score, but he could not quite get to the ball and it went out to Tomlinson who

netted in the simplest manner imaginable. Just after the restart Tomlinson almost repeated his success with a stinging shot which hit the cross bar and went out of play. The goal which probably settled the final result came from a brilliant piece of work on the part of the left wing, who worked down cleverly, and Williams finished the effort with the best shot of the day, beating Thorpe all the way. Before half-time Thorpe had to serve a hot drive from Simms, and in doing so conceded a corner which Rutherford headed just over the bar. Interval: Luton 2, Northampton 1.

The early play in the second half was devoid of interest until Bookman put Williams in possession, and he swung across to Roe, and the centre came to Simms, but his shot went skywards. The Cobblers, however, had gone all to pieces, and it was merely a question of time when the "Blues" would add to their score. It would have been a very unfortunate point if the Cobblers had equalised as a result of an injury to Dunn, for the referee allowed the game to proceed with Dunn lying full length on the ground, notwithstanding the protests of the Luton players. The ball got well in the Luton goalmouth, and Summers, in saving, also got badly in the wars; eventually he also was laid out with a severe kick on the thigh, and finally the game was stopped. It took quite a long time for Dunn to get round, both trainers being called on to assist, and play was stopped for several minutes. However both players resumed on the field, but Summers, in particular, limped very badly for the rest of the game, and it was fortunate the Cobblers forwards were not in their Southampton form, for Summers could scarcely get across the goalmouth to prevent a score.

However, soon after Simms literally bored his way through all opposition, and, although a couple of the home defence were in close attendance, he managed to get in a low shot which found a resting place in the net. The Luton contingent on the stand let themselves go to some tune, and called for more goals, chanting "One, two, three," rather sarcastically, and were hugely delighted when they were able to add "four" to their shout. Simms again did the trick, although this time Roe did the work which led up to the goal after cleverly rounding Sproston. Just before the finish the home crowd had their hopes raised by the unexpected award of a penalty kick apparently against Dunn, but Whitworth, who took the kick, failed to convert, Summers flinging the ball away in fine style. His comrades rushed to shake hands with him, although even if the goal had resulted there would not have been sufficient time for Northampton to alter the result, for the final whistle went very soon after. Result:—

Luton 4, Northampton 1.

Thirteen, in this case, did not prove an unlucky number. For Luton, indeed, that figure is a very pronounced feature of their record at the moment. Thirteen matches have been played, and the points to the credit of the club also stand at 13, while curiously enough the Blues stand thirteen on the Southern League table in consequence. The Cobblers were always the inferior team, and, coming after their performance at Southampton, it was remarkable how they collapsed against the thrustful methods of the Luton front line. The wing halves were the first to give way, with the result the backs were overworked, and ultimately overplayed. On the other hand, except in the opening stages, when Freeman managed to slip Elvey rather surprisingly, the Luton defence were always on top of the sporadic rushes of the home forwards.

Undoubtedly the great difference in the two teams was at half back. Luton carried by far too much weight in this department. The only player among the home trio who stood the game was Grendon, but his lack of inches handicaps him seriously. Clifton and Sproston are on the slow side, indeed on Saturday's display speed is not a great feature of the team. The new winger (Pease) from Leeds City was not given a deal to do, and the crowd were continually calling for him to be fed, but, as a rule, Dunn was able to cope with all his efforts. Summers was not overworked, but he got out of one or two ticklish corners cleverly, particularly when Dunn was hors de combat. The Luton forwards were in fine form, and Roe, in particular, gave much promise in a new position. Williams was possibly most in evidence, although Bookman, as usual did many clever things. He did not let himself go in the second half, when the game was won. Simms approached his pre-war form much

nearer than any previous match this season, and his first goal was quite in his old style. Tomlinson, as usual, worked as hard as anyone in the line. Although not able to distribute the ball like Roe he justified his inclusion in the side.