

FOOTBALL CHAT

(By CRUSADER.)

TOWN'S PLUCKY FIGHT.

LUTON TOWN 1 goal.
SOUTHEND UTD. 1 "

LUTON TOWN.

Summers.

Elvey Dunn
F. Hawkes Urwin Parker
Grimes Hill Higginbotham Fearn
 Simms

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Young Allen Wileman Jones Nicholls
 Evans Woodward Bollington
 Marshall Reid
 Leahy.

SOUTHEND UNITED.

Referee: Mr. J. T. Hornby, London.

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It was a great blow to lose a point almost on the stroke of time on Saturday. For an hour our ten men had played wonderfully hard against big odds, and then the visitors came along just before the finish and got a point they never deserved. In my notes last week I mentioned the nasty tactics which prevailed at Southend, and also found fault with the referee. I can honestly do both again with regard to the match on Saturday. As far away as the Press box there seemed to be no doubt whatever that Luton deserved a second goal, while I am perfectly sure that they should have had a penalty when Higginbotham was brought down in the penalty area and badly hurt in the second half. The reckless tactics of the visitors laid out Hill, Higginbotham twice, and Urwin, and it would be difficult to pick out the worst offender. For glaring cases of tripping I have never seen anything so bald as the Southend halves and Reid adopted on Saturday, and while the referee gave us free kicks, he should at least have cautioned persistent offenders. Hill and Higginbotham each suffered badly by this treatment, and there was little cause for wonder that one or two of the home players began to look after themselves.

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Everything was going smoothly until Luton scored, and from that point the ugliness developed until in the second half it would have occasioned no surprise if players had preferred to kick the man rather than the ball. In all other respects but this latitude to offenders, and the refusal to consult the linesmen when the appeal for the second goal was made, Mr. Hornby was not at all bad, but that Leahy was charged through the goal seemed absolutely clear, and every spectator behind the goal was agreed upon it, not less than the Luton players. There was nothing wrong with Hill's charge, for the referee allowed the game to proceed, and yet Leahy was spun right round, apparently well over the goal line, and had the ball in his arms. Mr. Hornby refused to consult the linesmen. He will do well to read the F.A.'s latest instruction that a referee's duties are not confined to what he sees, but that he should consult his neutral linesmen, who are expressly appointed to assist him.

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I have made no reference to Simms' injury in the above, because it was not

paused by an opponent. It was simply over-eagerness and straining to get at the ball. He turned suddenly and felt something snap, and, although he was loth to leave the field, it was obvious that he was in great pain, and he was very ill at half-time. At first it was thought a rib was broken, but this was not the case. He had badly strained or ruptured a muscle over the heart, and it is very unlikely that he will play again this season. I do not want to say, "I told you so," but readers need no reminder that I have been pressing for a rest for Simms. I got into some trouble in certain quarters for the suggestion, and Simms himself resented it, but this business proves how necessary it was. No player enters more keenly into his training, none is more

ager to play, but there are indications which make it more than desirable that a player should be rested at certain times and be immune from work. This is no reflection on Billy Lawson, for no trainer is more careful in his methods or desirous of safeguarding his boys, and he never turns out a man who is unfit, if he has any option. It was not altogether a question of physical fitness with Simms, however. Muscle and bone may be quite all right, but science is understanding more and more that the mind needs to be studied in connection with the body, and it is obvious that a player so earnest as Simms (no pun on his Christian name intended) cannot experience a run of wretched luck such as he has known, without being temperamentally affected, apart from physical wear and tear.

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It is a tribute to Ernest Simms' courage and love of the game that he has never before had to leave the field through injury. Those who know him, as I claim to know, the hard knocks and buffetings he has received without complaint, know that none better deserves a good rest. If he does not touch a ball from now until next August, he may get back to perfect condition and so have a chance to win back the high laurels he earned three years ago when he created a goal-scoring record in first-class football. If every player took his work to heart in the same way, there would be less dissatisfaction among clubs, and spectators would be better satisfied. Roe, Hill, Hoar and Urwin are players of exactly similar type. Elvey is another player who is showing like signs of strain and need of rest. They will be glad when the season comes to an end and they can rest. I leave the matter there for the moment.

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Simms had the satisfaction of scoring the Town's goal, and on his form up till his injury he looked like getting more, for he was gradually falling into the style of Higginbotham, and all the forwards were doing well. Even with ten men the Town deserved to win, for although, as was to be expected after Simms' retirement, Southend had the better of the exchanges, the home defence rose to the occasion, and on comparatively few occasions did they look like scoring, for only infrequently they got a chance of shooting. Summers saved several warm shots, and he fielded the ball finely, but would probably have saved the shot with which Nicholls equalised, had he not been unsighted, for there was not much pace on it, and it seemed to just crawl under the bar. It was hard to have to surrender a point after putting up such a brave defence.

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Upon the defenders fell the brunt of the work, and Dana played finely. I don't know if the old Eccles lad is getting more sober as the days go by, but when, as he has done lately, he plays the ball more than the man, he gives of his best. He was a fine partner for Elvey on Saturday, and Dick was in good form against a pretty hot wing, for Young is the best forward the "Seasiders" have. At half, the play was so level that one cannot well discriminate, and Fred Hawkes again proved his right to a place in the team. Urwin was sadly hacked about, but the bantam's pluck never failed, and he kept going right to the last minute. Of the forwards it is difficult to say a lot. Simms' departure disarranged the machinery, and their work was chiefly by individual raids.

after the interval. They played pluckily, especially Hill and Higginbotham, and the latter is going to make good. I hope the crowd won't keep telling him to part with the ball, but will try to appreciate the manner in which he draws the opposition and then passes to a colleague for a burst through. That he is not lacking in pluck was evidenced by the fact that two nasty jars failed to put him out for "keeps," and he stuck it manfully to the end. The same may be said of Percy Hill. He showed dash, cleverness, and grit, and one goal he certainly deserved. Grimes did nothing brilliant, but was working very harmoniously with Hill until Simms' departure. Of Fearn one cannot say much, except that he, too, had shown a few nice touches, and was gaining confidence

before Simms got hurt. He is only a boy in his teens, but he has a good turn of speed, a nice centre, and when he has got over "nerves" he will do well. In the second half he got very little chance, but a few games with the Reserves should give him confidence.

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Of the visitors, Leahy kept goal well. Reid and Marshall were sound at back, but the former was none too scrupulous. The fairest of the halves was the biggest man, Woodward, and his game was made easier by Simms' retirement. Of the forwards, Young was quite the cleverest. He was fast, strong, and centred well, and against a less resourceful man than Elvey he would have brought goals. Wileman was eclipsed by Urwin, and Parker usually had the measure of Jones.

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It is to be hoped that Hoar and Bookman will have recovered from their injuries and be in readiness for the heavy Easter programme. Rutherford is almost a certain starter, and if all except Simms are ready by Friday, I hope that Parker will get a chance in the forward line, that is, if Newman cannot play. Provided the last-named cannot come to Watford, I think the defence as on Saturday, and the following forward line would do well: Hoar, Hill, Higginbotham, Parker, and Bookman. Under any circumstances, for private reasons, Bookman cannot go to Norwich on Saturday, and the forward line might then be: Higginbotham, Hill, Newman or Parker (either position) and Hoar. This is only a suggestion, but I imagine the directors will have to call upon Roe again during the holidays.