

FROM THE FOOTBALL FIELD.

SIMMS THE LEADING THIRD DIVISION SCORER.

Luton have reclimbed into the top six in the Third Division table, and Simms has taken the lead among the Third Division individual goal-scorers, as the result of a decisive win and a clever "bat trick" performance against Norwich City on Saturday. Watford and Swindon only lead the Town by virtue of superior goal averages, and the Town would have had no more than their deserts if they had wiped out the goal deficit which they have been steadily reducing since the first Saturday in October. Present positions and records of the leading six clubs:—

	Goals.						
	P.	W.	L.	D.	F.	A.	Pts.
Southampton	15	9	1	5	29	8	23
Crystal Palace	16	9	4	3	28	14	21
Millwall	16	9	4	3	22	13	21
Watford	15	8	5	2	24	15	18
Swindon	15	7	4	4	30	21	18
Luton Town	15	7	4	4	27	28	18

By a singular coincidence, Norwich City were twelve months ago Luton's first visitors after the set-back administered by Crystal Palace on the Town ground. On that occasion, they took away one of the points, which the Town later recovered on their visit to Norwich, but the fortunes of the two clubs have this season been castly different from what they were a year ago. Then it was Luton who had struck a very bad patch, whereas the Canaries have only just turned what has been a long and awkward corner. It was not until the last Saturday in October that they scored their first goal at home, and up to a week ago they were at the bottom of the Third Division table, but a couple of victories at the expense of Reading have given them a rare flip.

Only Parker, Har, Simms and Bookman played against the Canaries in the corresponding match of twelve months ago, and the backs, Gray and B. G. Smith, and the veteran half back, Martin, were the only Norwich players at Luton on that occasion. Gray, of course, is the Derbyshire product whom some knowing bird credited with having signed for Luton a few weeks before the commencement of the present season. Gray at that time had not signed for Norwich, and had expressed his determination of not doing so, and Luton did go to the extent of making informal inquiries as to the figure required for him. It was a four-figure sum that was quoted, and Luton went no further with the matter, and directly afterwards Gray altered his mind and re-signed for the City. Martin, the captain, has been a faithful old servant of the Canaries, and takes a benefit shortly. Of the new men, Booth and Travers have not been with the Canaries a month. The former was secured from Newcastle United, and the latter from Millwall. Travers scored the goal that won Barnsley the F.A. Cup, and last season he played in 24 Southern League games for Swindon.

The only change made in the Luton team from the previous week was one that was fully expected, Lamb being dropped from the half back line. Parker returned to his old position, and Walsh got another trial at centre half, this being his third appearance in the first team since he was recruited.

Appended are the teams:—

Luton Town: Barley; Lennon, Tirrell; Molyneux, Walsh, Parker; Hoar, Higginbotham, Simms, Mathieson, Bookman.

Norwich City: Skermer; Gray, B. G. Smith; Wilkinson, Martin, Hopewell; Austin, Travers, Dennison, Booth, Dobson.

Referee, Mr. F. Leigh, Hanley.

It was not surprising that the attendance was the smallest there has been on the Town ground for a Saturday first team this season, falling far below the 6,500 mark, or scarcely more than half the number present at the Crystal Palace game, because the thickness of the fog made the duration of the game very uncertain. It was not possible to see from one goal to the other, but the players presented ghostly figures as they flitted about, and there were times when it seemed impossible that the play could run its full course. It was very often extremely difficult to follow the progress of the play, but happily just when matters were expected to get much worse there was a sudden lift midway through the second half, and the closing stages could be better observed than any other period.

The greasy state of the going and the ball accounted for many miskicks and errors of judgment, and ball control was rendered extremely difficult, but the Town team rose superior to the conditions in most masterly fashion, and it is no exaggeration to say that the result was never in doubt from the time the homesters captured a first minute lead. The ball had not been out of the Norwich half when, following forcing work by Hoar,

his supporting half dropped the ball across, and Mathieson cleverly deceived the defence by jumping over it and allowing it to go on to Bookman, who drove it low down just inside the post with the goalkeeper unsighted. The Canaries were a hefty go-ahead lot of players, and there was plenty of speed and dash in their movements, but the inside men could not shake off Walsh, and on the few occasions they did open up the game Lennon and Tirrell met the attacks in resolute style. Bailey's charge was in danger only thrice during the half. On the first occasion Travers was given offside simultaneously with the goalkeeper tipping over the bar a rising shot by Booth, on the second Travers was allowed to go on in an offside position, and seemed to have the goal at his mercy when he parted to Danson and the centre was whistled up, and the third was ten minutes before the interval, when Wilkinson got in a great drive from a corner, and Bailey negotiated the ball over the bar in glorious fashion.

It was a very different experience that the Norwich defence had. Although little use was made of the Luton outside wingers, the inside trio worked together with such precision and were so ably backed by the halves that Gray and Smith were always having their hands full. The two main factors which prevented Skermer from being overworked were that neither the backs nor halves were any too particular about their tackling methods, both Simms and Higginbotham having abundant reason for resenting the treatment meted out to them, and offside tactics were frequently exploited. The latter feature threatened for a time to ruin the game, for the Luton backs were quick to show that they could resort to the offside style of defence just as effectively, but the very persistence of the pressure exerted by the Town forwards caused its gradual disappearance. Simms was never ceasing to bustle the backs with his forward rushes, and Higginbotham lent him fine support, but Mathieson marred his usefulness to the extent to which he overdid his trickeries.

The best openings which presented themselves were thrown away until the last few minutes of the half, when Skermer had a terrific time. He saved finely from Hoar, a regular "flier" from Mathieson just missed the target, and from a lovely centre by Hoar Mathieson hit the bar with Skermer hopelessly beaten, the goalkeeper being very lucky to recover in time. It looked as if it was going to be another case of Luton doing everything but score, when with five minutes to go Simms fastened on the ball twenty-five or thirty yards out and let fly one of his characteristic punches. The ball was just under the bar, and Skermer got to it and appeared to hit it and half hold it against the under part of the bar, but the pace behind it was too much for him, and after a great struggle he had to pick it out of the net. Almost directly afterwards, a pretty movement resulted in Simms getting the ball in the net again but the whistle had gone for offside, and Luton had to be content with an interval lead of 2-0.

This score never looked like standing long on the resumption, for Luton's superiority was even more pronounced than ever. Except for rare breakaways, the Canaries were penned in their own half. Skermer was completely outwitted by one of the prettiest moves of the game. Molyneux, following the right wing up closely, pushed the ball beautifully to Simms between the backs. With one stride he was by Gray, a swerve, and he was out of Smith's reach, and Skermer dashed out only to have the ball placed beyond him. Higginbotham presented Simms with a gilt-edged opening for his equaliser. Norwich could not have prevented it in any event, but they did not attempt to do so, ceasing play to appeal for offside, but the referee was only emphatic in his award of a goal. The last five minutes were highly charged with excitement. The goal seemed as if it must fall every moment, but Skermer kept a fine goal to the end, and so the result was:—

Luton Town 4, Norwich City 0.

It was Luton's best and easiest win of the season, and Norwich could not have complained if the score against them had been twice as large.