

FROM THE FOOTBALL FIELD.

SATURDAY'S CUP TIE.

LUTON'S FINE PERFORMANCE AGAINST BIRMINGHAM.

A MISSED PENALTY AND DIS- ALLOWED GOAL.

For the second year in succession Luton Town is among the clubs in the hat for to-day's draw for the second round of the English Cup. By the time these lines are read, the Town's task in the next stage of the football Waterloo will have been settled, and it will be a general disappointment if history has not again repeated itself at least to the extent of giving Luton another Cup game at home. By their defeat of two Second Division clubs, the Town team have conclusively outlived the club's pre-war reputation of being of little or no account as Cup fighters, and the two stiff hurdles they have surmounted fairly entitles them to the luck of the draw. Every local enthusiast is naturally keen on seeing one of the big clubs at Luton, but it will be much more to the advantage of the club if the draw has provided a task affording a reasonable prospect of further progress in the competition.

Good fortune is the essence of Cup-tie successes, and apart from the fact of being drawn at home to Birmingham, Luton cannot be said to have been particularly favoured so far. There was no luck about their defeat of Birmingham. Some may be inclined to controvert this statement by quoting the escape the Town had from the penalty awarded just after Birmingham equalised. A goal lead for Birmingham at that stage of the game would undoubtedly have made a vast difference, but against this it must be urged that the Town were distinctly unlucky to have the penalty awarded against them, and even more unlucky to have the finest goal of the match disallowed.

Twelve months ago Luton were also at home to Second Division opponents from the Midlands in the first round proper of the F.A. Cup competition, but they were opponents of a different calibre to Saturday's. Coventry City were no unfamiliar rivals to Luton in pre-war days, and their League record was nothing more than moderate, whereas Birmingham are numbered among the big clubs in name and fame, and their performances this season have been in keeping with their reputation. Standing third in the Second Division, their recent form has made them strong candidates for a return to the First Division, in which they have more than once figured with prominence, for in the last three months they have lost only three League points out of a possible 26. Their proved ability to win away from home made them in no way perturbed by the prospect of having to visit Luton, and while recognising in the homesters opponents not to be under-estimated the Brumagem club and its supporters were quite happy about their chances. The advantage resting with Luton in the choice of ground, coupled with the Town's convincing win at Rotherham, made the independent paper experts less sanguine in their forecasts, although on paper Birmingham's chances were favoured by a comparison of the rivals' League records:—

Goals.

	P.	W.	L.	D.	F.	A.	Pts.
Luton Town	22	9	7	6	37	36	24
Birmingham	22	15	6	3	45	25	29

Neither club went in for anything elaborate in the way of special training in preparation for the Cup tie. Except that Billy Lawson gave his "boys" a little extra in the direction of road work, the homesters followed much about their usual training course. Birmingham also favoured a quiet and conventional training at their quarters at St. Andrew's, which largely consisted of keeping the men together, and the team did not travel to Luton until Saturday morning.

The Town directors met with general approbation in selecting for the Cup tie exactly the same team that won at Rotherham in the last qualifying round. This, of course, is

volved the re-inclusion of Lamb in place of Cockerill, and the recovery of Lennon from his Christmas Day injury. It was given out a week ago that there was practically no hope of the popular back figuring in the game, but as a result of the application of electrical massage treatment, Trainer Lawson was able to report at the directors' weekly meeting that there were hopes of Lennon being fit. This was welcome news, but his fitness could not be finally determined until after a thorough testing at ball practice on Friday. This trial proved quite satisfactory to both the player and officials, and the roar of welcome which greeted his re-appearance was an unmistakable indication of the place which he has won in the hearts of the Town's supporters.

Like Luton, Birmingham have been pretty fortunate in escaping a heavy toll of casualties, but nevertheless they had to bemoan the absence from the Cup tie of one of their highest-priced players in Lane, the centre-forward for whom they last season paid Blackpool what was then the record transfer fee of £3,500. Lane has been operated upon, but it was not thought expedient to risk him in the Cup tie, although since he was injured a month ago, the Midlands have fallen off notably in their goal scoring. At first the centre berth was given to Harry Hampton, the famous old Aston Villa centre and hero of more than one Cup final. Hampton, who was given a free transfer by the Villa last season, heads the Birmingham list of goal-scorers with a dozen, as many goals as he got all last season, but in the centre he was found to be yards slower than Lane, and in the Christmas matches, Bradford, who has been scoring consistently for the Reserves, was introduced at centre, and has kept his place since. Crosbie, who was in the Ayr United team with Semple last season and is considered one of the most skilful of inside wingers, and Barkinshaw, an old Sheffielder, have partnered one another on the right wing pretty regularly, and Hampton also had his regular partner on the left in Whitehouse, a local product. There were no changes in the team beaten at Leeds the previous Saturday.

In defence, Birmingham have had occasion to make little or no change during the last two months. Their backs at the beginning of the season were their old pair, Ball, who played for England in the Victory International against Wales, and Womack, who has represented the League against the Scottish League, but since Ball was injured Jones has developed into a very fine back and cultivated a thorough understanding with his fellow Yorkshireman. Roulson has occasionally been out of the side at half back, but McClure and Barton have been fixtures, the centre half being the big man of the side and a hard, determined worker, while Barton is considered one of the standard half backs in English football to-day.

Appended are the teams as they lined up:
Luton Town: Bailey; Lennon, Tirrell; Molyneux, Parker, Lamb; Hour, Higginbotham, Simms, Mathieson, Bookman.

Birmingham: Tremelling; Womack, Jones; Roulson, McClure, Barton; Barkinshaw, Crosbie, Bradford, Hampton, Whitehouse.

Referee: Mr. F. Todman, Croydon.

The weather could scarcely have smiled more benignly on an important game, and this doubtless went far to counteract the outcry raised against the increased scale of admission charges imposed by the directors. The concession made to married ex-Servicemen who are unemployed by allowing them to obtain tickets in advance at the ordinary minimum "bob" rate was evidently much appreciated, and an hour before the kick-off there were not many points of vantage available on either of the terraces, but some of the top-priced stand seats went begging, there was always room in the lane stand, and on the enclosure side of the ground the gap near the Kenilworth-road entrance was but sparsely filled. The general estimate of the crowd at the time of the kick-off was 13,000, and from the official figures it appeared that this was not far out, the number paying for admission being returned at 12,700, and the gate receipts at £1,518. The gate is a record for Luton, the total for the Liverpool Cup tie last year being £1,455, but the attendance at the Liverpool match was larger than on Saturday.

In the first twenty minutes Birmingham more or less had complete control of the game. "Class will tell," murmured some of the pessimists, and it required a bit of courage to make the famous Asquithian reply, "Wait and see." Right from the kick-off, the Midlands made tracks for the Luton goal, and within a couple of minutes Lennon had to show that his Christmas injury has robbed him of none of his superb dash and pluck, and Bailey was warned of the penalties of dalliance by an altogether unnecessary

by Burkinshaw after he had possessed himself of the ball from a long shot. The home halves were obviously baffled by the cleverness displayed by the Birmingham forwards in their machine-like close passing. Time after time they seemed in a hopeless tangle, and danger threatened almost every minute, but Lennon and Trell stood gallantly in the breach, and Bailey was only twice seriously called upon. Crosbie was the marksman on each occasion, and one of his shots called for a great effort by the goalkeeper, but with the ball returned to the goal-mouth immediately following this save, Semple's old club mate threw away a gilded chance.

Although the Luton halves and backs were tireless ferrets and gave the Birmingham men little rope they were not able to gain much relief, the home forwards seeming hopelessly at sea against the one-back tactics cleverly exploited by the visitors. Nearly every time Simms got possession from forward inside passes he was whistled up, and there was not an attack of note on Luton's part until they struck the happy idea of opening out the game and making use of the wingers. This change of tactics at once exposed the weakness of the visiting defence—lack of speed. They were in trouble the moment Bookman and Hoar started racing away down the line. Twenty minutes from the start Bookman, getting the ball from Simms, easily showed Roulson a clean pair of heels, beat Wemack, drew Jones across, and eluded him, and centred low down at a backward angle. Simms was all alone to meet the centre, and with a straight, low shot had Tremelling hopelessly beaten.

It was a pleasant surprise, and gave an edge to what developed into a fast and ding-dong, if somewhat scrappy struggle. Later Lennon had to concede a corner to avert danger from Whitehouse, and Bailey saved grandly from the winger's flag kick. Three minutes later, Birmingham were lucky to escape from another thrilling run by Bookman. Again he beat Roulson with consummate ease, and dropped across a centre at a similar angle to his first. Higginbotham was on the spot this time, and drove it at

terrific speed, and although Tremelling stopped the shot he had to rely on the aid of his backs to scramble the ball away.

In the second half Birmingham relegated Bradford to outside left. Hampton going centre and Whitehouse inside and the re-organisation very neatly brought them the lead. Once more they led off in great style and Bailey twice had anxious times before the pressure was relieved. Unfortunately dalliance by Mathieson brought the ball back again, two successive corners were forced and from the second Barton headed in. For some minutes Luton appeared likely to collapse under this reverse and they were just showing signs of recovering when another disaster occurred. Tackling Hampton, Parker missed the ball and hooked up the ex-Villa a couple of feet inside the penalty area. It was such a technical affair that there was blank dismay when a penalty was awarded, and the crowd nearly went wild with delight when Jones shot wide.

There was, however, still an anxious time ahead for Luton. Bailey was given a taste of Hampton's fondle for putting goalkeepers into the net, but he refused to be dismayed, and saved in capital style from Crosbie. In other attacks he was covered finely by the backs and halves, but the home-sters were mostly defending until Parker sent Hoar away. The winger was able to get clear before centring, his centre was just out of the reach of Tremelling, and, racing in, Bookman breasted in towards the opposite side end of the goal. The goalkeeper was helpless.

With twenty minutes to go, Luton were playing like a winning team. Tremelling had to save from Higginbotham and Simms, the latter putting a beauty just under the bar, and 7 minutes later he was gloriously beaten by Mathieson. Simms had given up hopes of getting the ball from a forward pass, when Jones kicked it on to him. He promptly pushed it forward between the two backs, Mathieson raced in and scored with a great shot, only to be ruled offside—the worst decision of the game.

The last ten minutes saw a wonderful rally by Birmingham, and Luton were kept hard

at it at defending right to the end, with the final score:

Luton, 2; Birmingham, 1.

The ding-dong fight put up by the visitors was a complete answer, to those who hinted that Birmingham were too keen on League promotion to care about cup-tie successes. Luton had to go all out to win, and they won on their merits. It was in every way a fine performance, and due more than anything else to the superb spoiling work of the defence, and the aptitude with which the forwards adapted themselves to the only winning game. In scientific finesse they may have been no match for the visitors, but in speed and dash they were overwhelmingly superior and Birmingham were pretty well run off their legs long before the finish.

According to the visiting Pressmen the Birmingham attack was much below par, and while they attributed it largely to the absence of Lane, they also confessed to a very high opinion of the Luton defence.

CLARENCE AND THE AMATEUR CUP.

The draw for the F.A. Amateur Cup competition has panned out for the Luton Clarence exactly as the F.A. Cup draw did for the Town Club, in that their success away from home has been followed up by their being drawn at home in the next round. Their second round opponents next Saturday are the R.A.M.C. team from Aldershot, and according to all accounts the Clarence are up against a pretty stiff proposition.

STRAY SHOTS.

Luton schoolboys succumbed to Brighton in the second round of the English Schools Shield competition, on the Brighton and Hove Albion ground on Wednesday afternoon. The Seasideers was four up before Griffin gave the Lutonians their only goal.

Saturday's Cup win was a birthday celebration for Mr. Chas. Green, the Town Club secretary.

A rather severe outbreak of whooping cough caused the postponement of a Sunday School Christmas treat at Husbome, Crawley.