

FOOTBALL NOTES

LUTON TOWN'S GREAT WIN.

Birmingham Beaten.

(By CRUSADER).

For the third time Luton Town are in the second round of the English Cup. They earned the right on Saturday by a win over that crack combination, Birmingham, candidates for promotion to First Division football. By two goals to one they won one of the hottest struggles seen on the Town ground for a very long time. Both sides played desperately hard, and while many of those who saw the match would differ from me if I were to claim Luton as the superior side, they can hardly quarrel with the tribute paid by the official of the Birmingham Club, who, after the game, openly said: "Luton won on their merits; they played the right kind of football and took their chances, and our men did not." Personally I frankly admit that it would require a vivid imagination to claim that man for man Luton were the better side, but it is certainly within the limits of truth to claim that the Town deserved to win because they were better on the whole.

At the commencement of the game the visitors gave the impression of being a clever, well-balanced team, smart and speedy of movement, vigorous in attack and stubborn in defence, while our men were obviously unsettled and a little awe-struck. When that feeling had worn off they proved that they, too, were stubborn in defence and undoubtedly the speedier and more thrustful in attack, and with the exception of a palpitating period in the second half when they had a slight relapse, brought about by a change of tactics on the part of the visitors, they were always as good and often more dangerous than the opposition. The awakening of Luton was very thorough, and quickly gave a shock to the visitors, for a goal came from the foot of Simms as the result of a dashing run by Bookman. The little winger actually beat three men, Roulson and Womack at close quarters, and Jones, by lobbing the ball across to the unmarked SIMMS at the right moment, and a fast ground shot had the Birmingham goalkeeper beaten.

For about ten minutes Luton had been playing equally as well as the visitors, but from then to the interval they had the better of it.

Birmingham's re-arrangement of the forward line made a difference when the game was resumed, and after several warm attacks had been beaten off by Bailey and his backs, the visitors equalised, a perfect centre by Burkinshaw being converted by BARTON'S head. Then came the penalty incident, in which Parker was adjudged to have fouled Hampton, but Jones shot wide. From this point Luton were holding a revival, and the culmination was a goal by BOOKMAN, who ran in and forced over the line a centre from Hoar. Later Mathieson netted with a wonderful shot, and the referee gave him offside. In my opinion, as in that of the Birmingham officials, it was the finest goal of the match. A clever pass from Simms was picked up by Mathieson, who drove home the ball from about 18 yards range at a terrific pace. The visitors, who were not slow to make use of the offside rule, never appealed, and so the referee's judgment was all the more unexpected. In the last few minutes Birmingham fought very hard for an equaliser, but failed to get it, for the Town played on the defensive, and kept them out, and the game was won.

None enjoys the scientific phases of the game more than I do. Facile footwork and precise passing have a charm all their own, but they are wont to prove less effective than the rapid raid and swift shot. So while admitting that there were moments in the game when the pretty passing between Birmingham forwards evoked much admiration, there was not the same thrilling sense of enjoyment as when Hoar or Bookman at full speed burst past an opponent and headed for goal. I was rather surprised that a team with 40 goals to its credit should have so few real sharpshooters in the forward line. The visitors did not shoot nearly so often as anticipated, although, no doubt, quite often enough for Bailey. Probably they were a bit surprised by the speed and vigour with which the Luton halves and backs tackled, and were not allowed to deliberate as much as usual. Our forwards lost chances in the same way, but

the reputation of Birmingham as match-winners led us to expect something different. The result amply proves that Luton Town are quite good enough for the best company in the Second Division, and that being so they would certainly make a better show than some of the Division I. clubs.

One of the writers who came to Luton has described it as a one-man match. That is quite erroneous. The victory was won by the whole side. I would be the last to deny Louis Bookman his share of credit, but I know that he would be the last to make any such claim for himself. That his work laid the foundation of the first goal and so changed the complexion of the game, there can be no doubt, but the foundation of victory was in the solidity of the defence, which refused to be beaten in the first quarter-of-an-hour, when the opposition played with a dash and virility that boded ill for Luton.

Bailey, Lennon and Tirrell put in sterling work throughout, and to these must go a very large share of the glory. Resourceful, strong, keen as mustard, they guarded the breach, and never relaxed their vigilance until the game was won. The halves, too, although a bit perturbed at the beginning, rose to quite a high standard, and played with rare vigour and determination. In the opening stages Birmingham relied to a great extent on their extreme wingers, and when the home halves hit on the method, Molyneux and Lamb kept a close watch on them and so robbed the attack of much of its sting. Parker has not met a smarter trio of inside men this season, but he grimly hung on to them, and when he was overcome they usually found the backs were wide awake. The forwards did not get so much help from the middle line as usual at the beginning, and they did a lot of "fetching and carrying," particularly the two inside men, and we did not get so much combination as usual. The long, swinging passes to the wings, however, enabled Hoar and Bookman to make headway, and they gave any amount of trouble once they were on the move. They were up against a much-boomed middle line, but in speed and quickness of movement generally they were too fast. Bookman did not get enough to do, as usual, or the score might have shown a wider margin in Luton's favour, and it is a great pity that this fault is not remedied. He is just about the fastest man we have seen on the Town ground, and very few defenders can cope fairly with his speed. Hoar is almost as fast, but gets a lot more work, and he would not grumble if some of it were shared with Bookman. Higginbotham looks after both Hoar and Simms very well, and if Mathieson would do the same the attack would be much stronger. The "donkey" work undertaken by Higginbotham is enormous, and his crafty co-operation is fifty per cent. of Hoar's success. Mathieson's cleverness is beyond question. Entertainment he provides in plenty, and few men can juggle with the ball as he can, but he should give his colleagues the full benefit of it.

It may seem that one harps on this string too much, but it is obvious that Mathieson is not himself getting the full reward of his labour, and one cannot insist on it too much. Several times on Saturday a cute little feint, a side-step, or a swerve, deceived an opponent, but instead of the ball going to a colleague at once, the manoeuvre was repeated and often ended in an opponent getting the ball. As a matter of fact it was from one of these dallyings that Birmingham were able to make the advance that brought their goal. That the big Irishman can get goals was proved by the beautiful shot that the referee declared illegitimate. One could not wish to see a better goal, and if Mathieson would only see to it, he would get more of these chances if he parted with the ball to his colleagues at the right moment. Let him try it at Northampton on Saturday for a start. Simms proved his mettle against the giant M'Clure, and had lots of hard tussles. He played a strong game, giving the backs no peace, and in addition to lashing the ball out to the wings he shot well and was always in the thick of it when the ball was anywhere near goal.

Of Birmingham I liked Jones, who is quite a recent capture, quite as much as the experienced and smart Womack. He had more ginger. Tremelling did very well in goal, too. The halves certainly deserve most of the good things said about them. They tackled splendidly, and gave much assistance to their forwards, and if they were deficient in speed it was only because they were up against very fast forwards. M'Clure is a fine centre-half, quite the best seen on

the Town ground this season. The forwards were clever without being very convincing. Crosbie is certainly a clever exponent, and he played a brainy game, but the inside men generally were too elaborate. Burkinshaw was the chief source of danger, and that he did not succeed was principally due to the watchfulness of Lamb.

Mr. Todman's refereeing was an improvement on his exhibition of the previous week, but there appear to be prospects of an inquiry into the circumstances of the penalty. Lennon stood against the post when the kick was taken, a clear infringement of the law. On that, after they had left Luton, Birmingham decided to protest, and so acquainted Luton and the Football Association. On Monday, however, when they should have presented it, they wisely withdrew, for they had overlooked the fact that the referee is the sole judge on points of fact.

Luton Town 2 goals.

Birmingham 1 goal.

LUTON TOWN. — Bailey; Lennon, Tirrell; Molyneux, Parker, Lamb; Hoar, Higginbotham, Simms, Mathieson, Bookman.

BIRMINGHAM.—Tremelling; Womack, Jones; Roulson, McClure, Barton; Burkinshaw, Crosbie, Bradford, Hampton, Whitehouse.

Referee.—Mr. F. Todman, Croydon.