

FOOTBALL NOTES

(BY CRUSADER).

LUTON LOSE AT NORTHAMPTON.

NORTHAMPTON TOWN — 1 goal

LUTON TOWN Nil

NORTHAMPTON.—Thorpe; Watson, Hewison; Grendon, Jobey, Tomkins; Pease, Churchman, Whitworth, Lockett, Tysoe.

LUTON TOWN.—Bailey; Lennon, Tirrell; Roe, Molyneux, Lamb, Hoar, Higginbotham, Simms, Butcher, Bookman.

The chances of the Town to earn promotion are gradually slipping away, and a favourable opportunity was lost at Northampton, when they suffered defeat by the only goal of the game. They were certainly not blessed by the best of luck, and they were up against a side that was desperately anxious to retrieve some of the honour lost on the previous Saturday by failure to win a Cup-tie, but they showed quite enough superiority in the general run of the game to have won with ease. Their work in the first half was of a very high standard until they were within striking distance, but they were quite incapable of a decisive shot. True, they got through once, and it was quite a smart effort, but the referee correctly held that Bookman, who was responsible for the movement that ended in Simms shooting into the net, had centred the ball after it had passed out of play. The ball was in the net before he made his decision known, but it would have been rough on Northampton to have lost a goal in that way.

The forward work of the Town was well worth a strong lead at the interval, but the players failed to shoot either straight or hard enough to beat Thorpe, who had a comparatively quiet afternoon, so few shots had he to save.

The only legitimate goal of the match came midway through the second half, just after Lamb had been helped off the field owing to injury. WHITWORTH got the chance by a series of accidents that comes a player's way only once in a long while. He snapped up a pass from Jobey and went through on his own. He appeared certain to lose the ball when Tirrell advanced, for he had kicked it well forward, but the back stumbled and missed the ball, and Lennon also could not cover it, so finally the forward had a gilt-edged opening, of which he made good use.

Only in the matter of goal-keeping was departmental work on the Luton side above reproach. Bailey was as safe as usual, and he had a lot of awkward stuff to deal with, but neither eye nor arm failed him, and he was quite blameless in every respect. The backs were bothered by the sticky nature of the ground, and more than once they failed to gauge the pace of the ball as it left the turf. So did the home backs for that matter, and there were just as many mis-kicks by Watson and Harrison as by the Luton backs.

Lennon was seldom at fault, but Tirrell was certainly not at his best. He had the more enterprising wing to face, however, for Pease has developed into a fine player—fast and vigorous. The Luton middle line was quite unsettled, and the unwisdom of moving Molyneux was proved before the game had been in progress ten minutes. He was as full of energy and snappiness as ever, but he did not know whether to concentrate on Whitworth or Lockett, and these hefty players can each do a lot of damage unless opposed by a crafty and quick opponent. Roe certainly proved his worth again, and gave a polished display. His headwork and twinkling feet were fine, and he not only held Tysoe in subjection, but he had the better of many tussles with Lockett, and also fed his forwards very cleverly. Lamb, too, did a lot of good work, and followed the old custom of giving most attention to the extreme man. It was a policy that paid. He, too, fed his forwards well, and on several occasions he found time to help in making affairs warm for Thorpe and his backs.

The forwards were admirable in midfield, in spite of the unsparing and vigorous work of the home halves. Especially was this the case in the first half, and the game had not long been in progress before the Luton supporters were feeling satisfied about Butcher. The St. Albans lad was a long way off his best, but he and Bookman outwitted Grendon and Watson with much cunning, and it is evident that when the pair are accustomed to each other they will give opponents a warm time.

Bookman was very much in evidence and made many sparkling runs. For the first time, however, I think he held the ball too long. He did not centre quite so well as usual, and so the inside men had fewer chances than they should have had. This extra work for Bookman meant less for Hoar, but the right winger did many good things, and he was well helped by Higginbotham. Simms was not as smart on the ball as usual. He was followed very closely by the big Jobey, but he slipped him several times, only to fail in front of goal.

There was quite a mechanical sort of precision about the forward line in the first half, and it was not until the game was well worn that the Luton supporters thought of losing the points. They felt

sure of victory, and perhaps the players felt the same way. They made a mistake, but I do not think they are likely to repeat the error in the return game.

The "Cobblers" are a strong lot, but they are certainly not the equal of the Town from the scientific standpoint. Their characteristics have struck one very much as similar to the type affected by Luton last year—too much lifting of the ball. Seldom did the halves keep the ball on the ground, but Lockett and Whitworth benefited because of height superior to that of Luton's halves. They all played hard, energetic football, and they never shirked danger or balked at rule. They just got ball or man somehow, and this harassed our players in the second half.

Without predicting any actual result of the return game, I shall be very much surprised if Luton do not take very full revenge for this defeat.