

FOOTBALL NOTES

(By CRUSADER.)

Luton Town's Triumph.

The dull dogs who have predicted nothing good for Luton ever since the first match of the season, and probably ever since they began to talk football, have something to think about now. Hundreds there are, of course, who honestly felt that the Town had no chance whatever against South Shields, but hoped for the best, but scores of others who should have known better dinned into our ears for the past three weeks that Luton would make their exit—that the wins over Rotherham and Birmingham were in the nature of flukes, and it would be next to impossible to defeat South Shields away by the Tyne.

Could they have been at Horsley Hill, South Shields, at either 4 o'clock or 5 o'clock last Saturday they would have received a much needed lesson. From beginning to end there was only one team in the picture, and that was not the Shieldsmen. By sheer skill, pace, and stamina, the Town won what must have been the finest Cup-tie victory in the history of the Club. South Shields are by no means a moderate side. Every player showed cleverness above the average. Their failure was due to the super-excellence of the Town. It was, indeed, a great game in many respects, but for long periods the game was quite one-sided, and had the Luton players been intent on piling on the agony they might well have doubled their score. Imagine a Cup-tie in which a goalkeeper has only two decent shots to stop; or a full back kicking ~~secretly~~ only twice in twenty minutes. Such was the case so far as Bailey and Tirrell were concerned.

Before HIGGINBOTHAM scored the first goal after 11 minutes play, the Town forwards had done a lot of pressing, and when BUTCHER added to the lead ten minutes later he only got the reward of much labour. True the Town had the assistance of the wind in this half, but they were never worried about it in the second, when it was against them. They went about the work as before, and the result was that in two minutes BUTCHER had a chance from Simms' pass and got the goal which placed the issue beyond doubt—unless Shields could perform miracles. Then came SIMMS' goal 10 minutes later, and hundreds began to leave the ground, knowing that the end of South Shields' Cup ambitions had come. So it proved, for the Town had the better of the game throughout, and only the fact that they were disposed to rest on their laurels gave the Shieldsmen a chance to approach nearer to Bailey in the last ten minutes.

Fullest details of the mighty victory were given in the "Tuesday Telegraph," but little comment was made about the players individually. I will make good that deficit now.

All Worthy.

When we stepped on to the Tyne ferry on the return journey to Whitley Bay on Saturday evening, Harry Higginbotham called me aside and promised me an interesting five minutes. With Billy Lawson he took me into a corner of the boat where sat a crumpled and worried company of typical "Geordies." They fell to discussing the match, and a more excellent summary of Luton Town's superiority than that of a rugged Typesider I cannot compose. Most of the passengers had "wetted" their disappointment, but one was in that state of mind which words cannot properly explain. Thrice he was invited to give his opinion, and finally his tongue was loosened and he replied: "Well, the big 'uns they (Shields) couldn't pass, and the little 'uns they couldn't catch, so what could they do?"

It was true. The whole team started at such a pace and with such keenness that the home team never had a chance at any period of the game. But pace and keenness alone do not win matches, and the essentials of success in this game included skill, stamina, and absolute harmony among the players. Of this last cause I cannot speak too highly. From start to finish there was not a word of blame or a sign of fault-finding; every player was sincere in assistance to his colleagues' efforts, and the manner in which each played for all and all played for the side was beyond praise.

At no period of the game was any department of the Shields' side equal to the corresponding department on the other side; at no period could any individual player on the Shields' side surpass his opponent in like position. One fallacy needs to be eliminated. Many of the papers refer to the fact that Luton "outweighed and outclassed" the opposition. Outclassed, certainly, but outweighed — never. By reckoning up the "official weight" of each member of the side 124 stone is recorded to Shields and 125 to Luton; by comparing the weights of the forwards we get 53½ stone for Shields against 54 to Luton, and this difference is accounted for by the extra bit belonging to Higginbotham. It was not weight that played a part in the victory, but the chief factors were stamina, speed, skill, and, above all, happy understanding and absolute unselfishness.

I do not say that there was lack of speed or skill, or that there was any selfishness on the part of the home forwards. On the contrary, the men were fast and skilful, and it is noteworthy that Dick Parker, their centre-forward, was regarded as a leader possessing speed and dash that would place him far ahead of the average first-class centre-forward.

Some of those who saw Luton at Rotherham were of opinion that the Town did not play any better than on that memorable occasion. I differ. The Shieldsmen were better footballers than Rotherham—showing much more skill and understanding. Luton's play was on the same plan, but faster and more virile than at Rotherham.

Yet Bailey had only two difficult shots to stop, and these came at a time when the issue was absolutely safe, and the Luton players were amusing themselves rather than working. The first was a long hard shot from Hampson that was tipped over the bar, and the second was a shot that Tirrell had stopped but was not able to get away because he was hurt. Bailey would not have expected a cheer for stopping either.

The work of Lennon and Tirrell was of the very best. Lennon had the more to do, because opposed to the strongest opposition. In the first half he had just a few duels with Donald, and was quite the master of the youngster, while in the closing minutes, when the Town halves were allowing the backs to earn a little praise, Lennon's judgment and dainty clearances from awkward situations were the despair of the Shields' forwards. Tirrell had two kicks in the first twenty minutes. That may appear to be a depreciation, but as a matter of fact Tirrell himself could only remember having one kick during that period. Like Lennon, late in the second half he had more, and it was fine to see the way he anticipated passes or towered above the Shields' forwards when the ball came across and headed away. Parker vainly flung himself at the big back in an effort to dispossess him, while time after time the understanding between Lamb and Tirrell and their left wing was such that they often had a little entertainment on their own. Lamb would hold up the home right while Tirrell, with almost exasperating deliberation, proceeded to take what amounted to a free kick, and Butcher and Bookman had made ground and were on top of the backs when the flight of the ball came to an end. The understanding between Tirrell and Lennon was perfect, and they covered each other cleverly.

The Luton half-back line has been a theme for dissatisfaction for the last three months. On Saturday it was the strongest part of the team. The amount of work dispatched was extraordinarily large. In

the first half hour they broke the spirit of the Shields' forwards and evoked the envy of the spectators. They were practically impassable. Molyneux had the hardest task, for Donald was clever and fast, but within five minutes Molyneux had his measure, and harried him so much that the winger found Lennon in possession. As usual, one opponent took advantage of Billy's good nature and treated him badly. Opinion was divided as to the respective merits of Parker and Lamb. I am not going to part them. Parker's artistry, allied to speed and remarkable headwork, foiled the home inside forwards with almost clockwork regularity, and his long sweeping passes to the wings, and cunning pushes through the middle for his inside forwards, initiated many attacks. Occasionally he would be seen to leap so high above opponents, and take the ball when the altitude seemed impossible, that the spectators gasped in amazement. Lamb was different. He has never played better in his life. Keenlyside and Smith were regarded as something extra in the way of hot stuff, the former especially, but it is a certainty that Keenlyside has never experienced such a fruitless game. In the first half he was not allowed to have the ball when Lamb was about, and if, perchance, he was overlooked, Lamb seemed to hypnotise the ball, and get it again by some means. His headwork was clever indeed, and he nursed Butcher and Bookman in a manner as entertaining as it was effective, and he showed that he could both juggle with the ball and shoot. As gentle as a Lamb in disposition he was a Lion in effect.

With such men behind them the forwards played like men inspired. Skilful, zealous, enterprising, they varied their game with bewildering frequency. Simms only got one goal, and it was a real gift from Bookman, but it was just a mark of the winger's appreciation of the attention he had received. There was an absence of embroidery about the leader's work, but it was remarkably fast and accurate. He was the linchpin of the line; never making impossible attempts to do a lot of scoring on his own, but anxious that all his colleagues should have equal share of work and glory. He hustled the backs and shot whenever there was a likely opening, but for sheer coolness and ease of scoring his goal was the limit. Higginbotham played throughout with his customary energy and vigour. He saw to it that Metcalfe and Maitland should hinder Hoar as little as possible, and distributed the ball as freely as Simms. His goal was the best of the four because hardest to get. The wisdom of securing George Butcher was apparent. His trickiness was delightful to watch, and of immense value to Bookman and Simms, and thus to the side. It was quite a simple matter for him to bamboozle Hampson, and his nippiness in eluding defensive rushes and setting up raids thoroughly unnerved Hampson and kept Cresswell on tenterhooks. To Hoar and Bookman equally good testimony must be paid. There has been a lot of talk about the speed of the Shields' wingers, and also of Cresswell and Maitland, the home backs. Not one of the four had a chance with either Hoar or Bookman, and the Luton wingers electrified the crowd by the celerity with which they got off the mark, and the pace they covered the ground. In equal sprint they were always winners, and frequently they overtook the defenders and prevented them getting the ball away, while in centreing they always had an eye to the situation of the inside men. Each narrowly escaped scoring, and both deserved to do so.

South Shields are certainly not a poor side. It is usual for some of Luton's supporters to decry the visiting side when Luton secure a good win. It cannot be charged against Shields that they are a poor team. On the contrary, they play attractive football, and while the half-backs do, to some extent, play the rough game one associates with the Second Division, the forwards adopt a stylish game. The best man on the side was Cresswell, the right back, and he is certainly worthy of most of the good things said about him. He elicited admiration in the first five minutes, and what Shields would have done without him in the first half hour no one can tell. His tackling was strong, and yet he never had a free kick given against him for fouling an opponent during the whole of the game. His volleying was perfect, and his placing as accurate as possible. At times he utilised the offside rule well, and occasionally he had a dash through on his own, and near the end he struck the cross-bar. Maitland was useful and is a promising young player, but he was often flustered by the speedy Luton forwards. Walker, the custodian, had no chance with the scoring shots, while he saved many that would have scored but for his smartness. Hopkins played finely at half, and was much better than his colleagues, although all were prone to trip, often, and, well, not nicely. Donald and Parker were the best forwards in mid field, with Hawes the best marksman, but they got little opportunity.

On several occasions I thought that Mr. Cahill was at fault in the application of the offside rule, but on the whole he was one of the best referees I have seen this season. He was always well up with the play, and his decisions were prompt. After the game he looked in at the Luton players and congratulated them, remarking, "Boys, you played a marvellous game."

RECORD GATE RECEIPTS.

The number of people paying for admission at South Shields on Saturday was 21,003. The officials were not sure that this was a record. They thought the visit of Sunderland in a friendly game last season attracted more, but the money paid was a record—£1,776 6s. 1d. The odd penny came about through boys being charged 5d.

"SHIELDS KICKLETS."

What Shields Supporters Said of the Cup-tie.

The following little paragraphos were supplied to that excellent football journal, the "South Shields Gazette," by its readers:—

Before the match, the crowd were singing "Bubbles" with a motion. Afterwards, they were bubbling with emotion.

There was one "point" to remember about last week's game—we didn't lose two.

Trainer Miles had the "departed spirit look" before the end of the game last week.

Mary had a little lamb. But Luton have the giant one.

Shields supporter: "Were you at the match to-day, Bill?" Bill (dolefully): "Yes." Supporter: "Jolly fine band, wasn't it?"

Luton's wing man, "Hoar," was no "frost" and being "nippy," Shields found him "hot-stuff."

Luton brought their "Butcher," and "Lamb," and by their "joint" efforts obtained a good "score."

Luton soldier supporter: "Come on, Abe, let's have another!" Shields disappointed supporter: "Hey, this is a football stand, not a canteen!"

Since Shields are out of the "running" for the Cup it is understood their "sole" aim now is to keep to the "uppers."

If last Saturday's display by Luton is a sample of Third League football, it is time the Second and Third Leagues changed places.

Son (after reading paper): "What will they do with the net?" Father: "What net, my son?" Son: "It says here that Higginbotham found the net 10 minutes after the start."

Overheard at the Hill: "Cresswell seems to have a busy day to-day!" "Yes, and so would you if you had to dodge the "Butcher" and the "Bookman" all the afternoon.

The "Hatters" managed to "collar" the "tie" last Saturday. We "felt" it keenly at first, but now we don't care a "straw."

Youngster (after Saturday's match): "Mister, what's the time?" Man (grumpily): "Nearly five, aa think." Youngster: "Aa asked ye the time, not Luton's score."

Spectator (behind net, to Walker): "Garn, don't take a goal-kick, dribble it through the Luton players yessel' and try to score!"

Small boy (after fourth goal): "What league is Luton in, Daddy?" Daddy: "The Third Division, my boy!" Small boy: "Gee! What must the First leaguers be down their way."

Little boy, to his father, after the Cup-tie: "Who was the best player on the field, father?" "Arthur Laycock, my son, the St. Hilda cornet player!"

Criterion Corner (latest): Mr. J. W. Tinn has gone to Luton for some new football boots.