

Throughout last week the defeat sustained by the Town in the Cup-tie rankled sorely the minds of everybody concerned with the match. The players did not escape, but it is to their credit that they got over the shock so quickly, and when, on Friday afternoon, we set out for Glamorganshire, everybody was in good spirits.

Writing in the "News," I said something about an outside chance of promotion if we won at Merthyr, and my excuse for optimism—if optimism ever needs an excuse—was the prospect of seeing the Town reproduce their wonderful form of the early Cup-ties. That Shields win, I must confess, has become something of an obsession, for I am convinced that form would win promotion in either division of the League, but one friend insists that form differs from the average form as epoch differs from episode. On the contrary, I believe that what has been in human affairs yet can be, and regarding Luton football, must needs be if we are to climb into more aristocratic company.

It is so much easier to go from bad to worse than from good to better, and while hoping for the best, I felt that the Town would either restore the confidence of their supporters or suffer a big reverse. There was plenty of confidence among the players, and they never showed signs of losing it until the game had gone half its course. The two changes in the side were not regarded as likely to affect to any great extent the soundness of the team. Watson came in goal again in place of Harry Bailey, and Sidney took the place of Bookman at outside left because of Bookman's services, being required on behalf of his country at Belfast.

On Friday night we arrived at a dismal Cardiff, and every man was ready for Blanket Fair at the cosy Grand Hotel. On Saturday morning Billy Lawson was up before the "boots" and out before the newboys, but he found spectators of the Wales v. France Rugby match lining up for the match that was due eight hours later.

A walk round the commercial capital of Wales, early lunch, a more or less comfortable journey through the Taff Vale, and we were at Merthyr just before three o'clock.

Pendyrnar Park affords a splendid pitch, and although the turf is not of the quality of that on "Plaiers' Park," there is opportunity to make one of the finest grounds in the Kingdom. Little work is needed to improve upon the national advantages, and on Saturday some 16,000 people saw the game without danger of crick-in-the-neck, frog-in-the-throat, squint or squash.

Merthyr, we found, had made a couple of changes. Holmes replaced Langford at right back, and Rees Williams, the International right winger, resumed, so the teams faced each other as follow:—

MERTHYR TOWN.

Lindon.

Holmes, Ferrans.

Brown, Jennings, Clarke.

Williams, Walker, Beale, Crowe, Edwards.

O

Simms.

Sidney, Butcher, Higginbotham, Hoar.

Lamb, Parker, Molyneux.

Tirrell

Lennon

Watson.

LUTON TOWN.

Referee: Mr. C. T. Pearson, Stourbridge. Tirrell correctly named the coin and set the homesters to face a bright sun.

From this point the game is given as recorded by shorthand notes.

Luton are usually described as a big side, but there is not a lot of difference, and these "Martyrs" in flaming red jerseys look a pretty business-like pack. Apart from the sunlight it is not much of an advantage for Tirrell to win the toss for the fifth time this season, for there is not much wind—a mere capful.

Beale starts the game, and the fiery-headed Crows passes to Edwards. This young man finds Lennon a bit too quick, and the ball comes to Butcher, who trickily makes ground, but Holmes reviews a threatening situation with a big kick, and Edwards is off again. Molyneux is beaten, but Parker slips across and holds up the winger by a clever tackle. A big kick by Jennings is an effort to set Williams going, but Lamb steps in smartly and transfers to Butcher. The little forward drags Brown and Holmes, but Ferrans gets his leg in the way of a pass to Higginbotham, and sends clear. Again Lamb tries to put Butcher through, and Brown is so hard pressed that he has to kick back to Lindon for the latter to effect the clear-ance.

Loud expressions of joy as the little Williams gets on the move and slips past Lamb, but Tirrell interposes and the danger is passed. Jennings now shows the ball through the centre, and Beale cuts in for goal, but Lennon pulls up this centre-forward and drops the ball to his front line. Clever passing by Simms, Higginbotham and Hoar, and the ball is worked down in perfect style. Clarke trips Simms, and Parker's hard shot is cleared by Lindon. Simms is again in possession, but his kick, taken in a hurry, is just wide.

The whistle announces that he was off-side, too.

Again the Town forwards are on the move, and Simms and his right wingers carry it right through at quick march, the centre-forward eventually passing nicely to Hoar for a dash in. The winger takes the ball to the line and whips it right into goal, but the whistle goes again in his line, and the ball is out. Merthyr now come away from a centre. Edwards again shining, and Lennon failing to hold him, he puts the ball across. WALKER seizes on the edge of the penalty area, and trapping the ball promptly, lets drive with his left foot, and the ball finds a resting place in the corner of the net farthest away from Watson. It is a lucky goal, perhaps, but the reward of enterprise.

The Town try hard to get away, and Sidney takes a pass from Simms, but is pulled up for a foul, although he was in his own half when he started for the ball. Again Edwards takes the screen, and drives from long range, the ball passing well out. Stopping a long kick with his head, Lennon is laid out, and Billy Lawson is in requisition. Then the Town forwards are set in motion, and Simms dribbles cleverly, but his pass to Sidney is anticipated by Holmes, and when Higginbotham also tries a rapid raid, Jennings comes into violent collision with him. A free kick to Merthyr is awarded, but Tirrell—cleverly and Butcher snaps up Parker's pass and heads for goal. Walker tackles, and when beaten brings down the Luton forward from behind in dangerous manner. The free kick is cleared by Ferrans, and Williams again has a chance. By clever control he gets right to the goal line and centres, but the ball falls in the rear of his forwards and Parker hooks it away. Another free kick to Luton through Jennings, and Simms, and Higginbotham have shot at goal, but he is out of focus.

Another shot by Higginbotham from long range is fielded by Lindon, who clears. Jennings again brings Simms down, but Sidney is offside again. A dash to the Luton goal and Edwards puts high over the bar when a centre would be more useful. Simms is again brought down as he is dribbling, and he does not like it. Clever work by Higginbotham and Simms puts Hoar in possession, and the winger travels well. So does Ferrans, and when Hoar pulls up, the back confronts him. A cunning push between the legs of the back finds SIMMS ready to receive, and without waiting to make rings round anybody, the centre-forward shoots finely and at a smart speed the ball travels right away from Lindon into the farther side of the net. It is a lovely goal, and the spectators are immensely pleased with the execution. Merthyr do not like the equalisation of the scores. Merthyr do not like it, and they are off hot foot for goal, but Tirrell again bars the way, and Parker settles Beale's dash by a pretty bit of footwork. A long pass by Simms to Sidney brings trouble to Holmes, and a lot of shoulder is required before the back can clear. Parker overhauls and robs Edwards when Lennon is beaten, and then Butcher is going through when wrongly adjudged offside.

When Jennings are showing cleaner footwork than Merthyr, and though there is plenty of dash and speed about the side, the Jennings again pushes Simms, and the latter retaliates. The referee comes on the scene, and Simms walks over to Jennings, and the players shake hands. Some good this handshaking, for Jennings has again brought the centre-forward down very badly, Simms hitting the ground with such force that he displaces some of the turf with his head and shoulder. Surely the official ought to have done something more than the usual free kick, in view of what has previously happened. He doesn't.

Simms takes the free kick and lifts the ball under the bar, but there is not a lot of pace about it, and Lindon gets to it and pulls it down safely. Butcher is next in the picture with a clever dribble and pass to Sidney. The winger smartly beats Holmes and beats across, but Jennings relieves well. Then Hoar has another turn, and springing past, Clarke sets the ball over to Simms, who, with Higginbotham at his elbow, makes things very lively in the home goal. There is quite a dust-up until Ferrans gets rid of the danger by a huge kick. Edwards is pulled up in the nick of time by the joint labours of Molyneux and Lennon, but the home forwards are very energetic, and they come again. Simms temporarily holds up Williams, but a hefty kick by Clarke sends play to the left, and Edwards centres for Beale to have a shot, but Watson is quite safe, and gets rid smartly.

Now Mr. Referee, Higginbotham has fallen back and robbed Crowe smartly, but before he can get away the forward grabs at him and tears the sleeve of the Luton man's jersey. Higginbotham appeals, but the referee makes no sign and allows Crowe to go through and through.

From long distance, Beale tries another shot, but is well wide. Simms is again brought down by Jennings after a clever dribble, and Higginbotham would have been served a like way had he not stepped over Clarke's leg. Holmes again delivers the home goal from danger. Again Sidney beats Holmes and drops the ball into the middle, and it looks odds on a goal, but Butcher and Simms are foiled right on the goal line. Williams picks it away and drives the ball into the middle, but Walker sends well over the bar, and the Town come back to the other end at great speed. Simms is running through when upset by Clarke, but the free kick comes to nought.

The interval; the score is one all; the Town the better side, so far.

MERTHYR'S DASHING WORK.

The homesters are starting at a smart pace, but Simms is the first to get away. He is pulled up by Ferrans, and the ball comes to the other end. Lennon brilliantly holds up Crowe and Edwards, and saves Watson a lot of trouble. Things are not very bright with the Town, however, and Parker's necessary presence on the left wing leaves the centre rather unguarded.

He helps Molyneux to pull up Edwards, who is playing brilliantly, but a moment later the winger gets through against Beale. Tackled by Lennon, he passes in to BEALE. The centre is slow in getting under the ball, and Lennon and just misses the ball. Tirrell tries to get across, but the defence is all a tangle, and Watson does the only thing—runs out. By sheer luck the centre-forward gets past both Lennon and Watson and dribbles the ball through. Beale's goal is a real surprise to the spectators. He never had the ball properly under control, for it was bouncing awkwardly the whole of the time, and it was really a lucky thing, but it serves.

The Town are not playing with the ginger they showed in the first half. They are showing better ball control, but not nearly as much dash as the homesters, who are using their weight to better advantage, too. Edwards is again the damaging factor, and he wriggles through once more and shoots hard in. Watson saves brilliantly on the goal line, but at the expense of a corner. This is got away by Lamb, and Higginbotham and Tirrell carry play to the other end, only to see Holmes clear.

Edwards is again in the picture, and doing far more damage than Williams, who is singularly quiet. This time the winger forces a corner, and BEALE comes up with a rush, and catching it fairly on his head, nods it down into goal. It bounces over Watson's shoulder into the net. The crowd about themselves hoarse.

Butcher try hard, Butcher working well, but he is brought up suddenly by Brown, and when Williams essays a run through, Tirrell plants himself in the way and effects a clearance, and drops the ball into the middle of the field. It is soon back, however, and there is quite a storm round the Town goal, several players trying shots. Watson saves finely from Walker, and again right on the line makes a brilliant stop from Crowe. A moment later carry Tirrell and Clarke enter the bar when Watson is well beaten. Tirrell is doing well just now, and once more he comes through a crowd of players who seem shy of facing him. Lamb puts an end to a dribble by Williams, but the Town forwards cannot get far, and after Parker has run across to the left and forced Edwards to kick out, the home left winger again moves quickly through. Checked by Molyneux, he again recovers and fires in a terrific shot, but Watson again saves splendidly, and clears.

Simms endeavours to dribble through, but his path is blocked, and he passes to Higginbotham. The latter plays the right game now. He feeds Hoar cleverly, and the winger centres from close to the corner flag. Parker gets the ball, and drives in a lovely shot that Lindon catches just in time, and clears.

Another big shot from the Luton goal finds Lennon and Tirrell overworked, and when Simms takes a hand in defence and gets the ball away, he is tripped by Jennings. Edwards once more, and Molyneux finds the pace too hot. Lennon comes to his aid and succeeds, and then Molyneux accomplishes his best bit of work so far. He stops the winger and dribbles along to give Hoar a nice pass. The latter dashes through and centres, Holmes heading away with difficulty.

Butcher is attempting a run when brought down by Brown, and he is carried off with a damaged ankle. Luton do very little pressing now, and when Williams forces a corner, Beale dashes into Watson, although the ball is not near, and knocks the keeper into the post. While he is on the ground, Lamb gets the ball away, and then the referee calls a halt for attention to Watson, whose thigh is hurt. Sidney has the cold shivers apparently, for he is getting little work. When he does get it, Holmes is on top of him at once, and wins, sending Williams away. The latter taps the ball inside to BEALE, who shoots at once, and has the satisfaction of seeing a fine shot enter the net right away from Watson. It is almost as good a goal as Simms', the only difference being that it is not quite so deliberately obtained.

There is not much more than a scramble in it now. The Merthyr forwards are overdoing the "clever" business, and ours do not seem inclined to do much at all. Higginbotham and Hoar have a try, but Lindon clears with ease, and Simms is yards out of his reckoning with a hasty shot. Butcher is lively again, and he dribbles in and transfers to Simms, but the latter, shooting from long range, finds Lindon quite ready to clear.

Another rush by the home team and Watson makes a great save from Crowe, tipping the ball over the bar as it flashes into goal. The corner kick is cleared, and then things begin to drag, and we are all glad when the whistle sounds liberation.

WELL WON.

It was a good game in the first half, but the Town players never got going as well as in the change-of-side and second half. There can be no doubt that Merthyr deserved their win on the run of the game. They did not play with anything like the skill of the Town in the first half, but in the second they showed greater dash and vigour, and worked like Trojans.

SATURDAY'S RESULTS.

LUTON & DISTRICT LEAGUE.

DIVISION I.

Hayward Tyler & Co, Norton Rangers 2. Shillington 1, Coca Works 1. Christ Church 3, 3, Dursley Comrades 1. Westbourne Athletic 0, Skecho 2.

DIVISION II. (Section A).

Park-street Baptist 1, Victoria 6. Houghton Rovers 2, Kershaw's 1.

DIVISION II. (Section B).

Dunstable Wesleyans 1, Streatley United 4. Alton Juniors 1, Clydesdale 2.

DIVISION III.

Kent's Boys 4, Phoenix 2. Commer Cars Jun. 1, Church-st. Institute 3.

BEDS SENIOR CUP. (Semi-Final).

Fricker's Athletic 4, R.A.F. (Henlow) 0.

BEDS JUNIOR CUP.—(Fourth Round).

Leighton Ivy Leaf 1, Leighton Morgan's 0. Woburn United 0, Luton Roadside 0.

Bedford Town Res. 2, Bedford Lynton Wm. 1.