

LUTON TOWN SCRAPE HOME.

MERTHYR BEATEN IN ROUGH GAME.

LUTON TOWN 1 Goal.

MERTHYR TOWN Nil.

LUTON TOWN.

Bailey.

Lennon.

Tirrell.

Walsh.

Parker.

Lamb.

Hoar. Higginbotham. Butcher. Bookman.

Simms.

O

Edwards. Crowe. Beale. Walker. Williams.
Clarke. Jennings. Brown
Ferrans. Lindon. Holmes.

MERTHYR TOWN.

Referee: A. E. Caseley, Wolverhampton. Coming down Hazlebury-crescent after the game on Saturday afternoon, I overheard an elderly gentleman remark to his spouse, "It's funny how all these Welsh teams play such a rough, dirty game, isn't it?" I did not catch the reply, but I am not sure that it is so funny. The Welsh crowds, sporting in their own particular way, like their fare hot and strong, and the nearer the game is to the Rugby code, the better they like it. Now on Saturday the Welsh team found that there are others who can play the same game, and, without condoning any one of the many offences committed in the game, I may say that some Luton players certainly worked off grudges which had been fermenting from the previous Saturday. Candidly, I found little pleasure whatever in the game after the first twenty minutes, save that of expectancy. Last week I was requested to minimise in my account of the match at Merthyr various phases of rough play. I did so, but those who would like to estimate the state of that game may do so by imagining a display about three times worse than that they saw on Saturday.

It might have descended to the same low level had not Mr. Caseley cautioned Jennings early on for that flagrant foul on Simms, for the previous week Jennings did that sort of thing time after time with benefit to his side. There was little ground for praising the strict administration of the rules on Saturday. Mr. Caseley was too lenient, but he was a vast improvement on Mr. Pearson. I am glad, however, that Simms did not retaliate on Saturday. Holmes got it "in the neck"—or face—in his trouble with Butcher, and if he has got over it by now he will probably agree that "all square" has been pegged.

It was

A MISERABLE GAME

to any who merely wanted to see football, and the eight thousand odd spectators were certainly glad when the end came. As last week, the Town had the better of the game in the first half, but fell away after the interval, and the "Martyrs" recovered spirit accordingly. The Town ought to have won by a much larger margin if they had kept up the same standard in the second half as in the first, and, measuring by the amount of work done by the goal-keepers, they would be accredited the better side, but, little as Bailey had to do, I think that the Town were a bit fortunate to carry off the spoils. There were periods in the second half when the "Martyrs" threatened to sweep all before them, and it was in such a desperate effort that they won the game at Merthyr. On Saturday the Town defence faltered a little, and more than once were blessed by a little luck, but they kept their lines clear to the end, and so got both points. Nevertheless, I was disappointed that we did not get more goals, especially after such an excellent start. When a forward line gets a goal away from home, I am disposed to think they have done exceptionally well, and transferred the onus to the defence, but at home I think that a larger margin is expected and should be obtained by a forward line like ours. On Saturday they certainly were not at their best, and I think they were affected to a considerable extent by the resolution for reprisals. Occasionally we had a glimpse of the most delightful combination, and to one instance, in particular, I would refer, when a triangular movement by Lamb, Butcher and Bookman gave Simms a lovely opportunity, and the centre-forward had the ill-luck to send just over the bar. This was

THE THING THAT THRILLED

the crowd. The mechanism was perfect, and Lamb, as the initiatory factor, deserves the credit for it, but why he does not do it oftener I cannot imagine. It makes one wish sometimes that he were in the forward line, for in such movements he keeps the ball on the carpet splendidly.

In the second half the Merthyr forwards showed much better combination, but they spoiled it by their anxiety, and they never did anything to equal the machinery of this particular instance.

The all-important goal fell to SIMMS. Bookman had forced a corner, and he placed the ball right in the goal-mouth. Simms judged the flight of the ball to a nicety, and nodded it into the net.

This was not the only occasion that the ball was netted. Just before the change of ends, Higginbotham got through with a ground shot after a lot of clever work by Butcher, and a nice pass by Simms, but the referee adjudged him offside. In the second half the visitors' two best chances came from free kicks. Both were taken by Brown, and the referee got in the way of a terrific drive and was knocked out for a few moments. His unintentional intervention might have been disastrous for Luton, as the ball went right across the goal-mouth, but Tirrell came to the rescue with a mighty kick. The second time the referee

GOT OUT OF THE WAY,

and a great shot was sailing under the bar when Bailey pulled it down. He could not properly secure the ball, and Crowe dashed into him and knocked him away from it, and Edwards rushed it through. The referee had seen Crowe's foul charge, however, and gave a free kick against Merthyr.

The visitors might well have equalised

had they kept their heads, for their halves fed the forwards well, and they all played with dash and stamina. Their backs, too, utilised the offside rule with no little cunning, and it only required Lennon and Tirrell to do the same thing in order to completely spoil the game. And it was so. There was practically nothing to write about in the second half after this, except mistakes, and the referee's final whistle was never so welcome.

In many respects the game was an encore of a bad turn. Few, indeed, of the Town played at their best, and had it been a Cup-tie it could not have been fought in a more strenuous fashion. One fears to think what would have happened had John Lewis been in charge, but there things would never have got to such a pitch. Mr. Caseley himself thought it was too rough to be pleasant before half-time, but had he shown a more determined spirit at the beginning, I think we should have had a better game. The chief trouble, I think, arises from the fact that the return match is too soon after the first meeting. There is not sufficient time to get over little disputes, and players are very human indeed when the referee shows

SIGNS OF LENITY.

I am not going to acquit or blame Luton players. Save in three instances, I think, they played fairly, and they certainly were not so unscrupulous as were the "Martyrs" on the previous Saturday. But in these days it appears that an honest shoulder charge is a lost art, and instead we have elbowing, tripping, ankle-rapping, and a score of tricks that are "accidents" to the spectator, but which the player knows perfectly well are nothing of the kind. There were not half-a-dozen proper charges in this game, and Walsh was responsible for two of them.

Apart from sundry goal kicks, Bailey's task in the first half was limited to running out some distance, picking the ball up and kicking away. In the second half he had only two shots of any note, and one of those has already been referred to. The most gratifying feature of the day to Bailey, however, was the reception he got when turning out. All round the ground applause went up, and his return to the side was certainly popular, and must have reassured him of the sympathy of the spectators. Tirrell was the better back, and although he was beaten on several occasions, he got through a tremendous lot of work with great credit. His judgment in sharing the goal-line with the keeper at a dangerous moment is always useful, while his application of the offside theory would be even more successful if his colleagues knew it as well. Lennon was not at his best by a good deal, but he was

HANDICAPPED

to some extent because he was never sure of Walsh, and twice he miskicked under pressure. Neither does he work the offside principle like Tirrell, or he would save himself a lot of work. The backs certainly ought to come to some definite understanding in the matter. They play "too square," and Lennon is usually in the rear. The halves were moderate. Parker again accomplished many fine things, and Lamb looked after Williams very well in the first half. Walsh stuck pretty closely to Edwards, but there was not enough nursing of the forwards. Lamb showed us how it should and could be done, but did not do it often enough. Sid Hoar was not in the best of condition, and his work reflected that. Like the rest of the line, he gave his best in the first half. Higginbotham was a great worker, as usual, but he often appeared anxious to play half-back. Bookman was as good as any when he got the work, but was not plied often enough. Butcher's trickiness was of some account, and, like Higginbotham, he was always foraging. Simms, without touching his best, was always useful, and did well against the raw-boned Jennings. The ball was not swung about enough, however, and the extreme wingers did not get an adequate share of work.

Of the visitors, Lindon did fine work in the first half, and showed himself a judicious as well as an agile custodian. Ferrans was the better back, although both did well, but Holmes had a harassing time in the first half. In spite of overworking his tongue and frequent breaches of the rules, Jennings was a splendid centre-half. He timed his rushes well, and he must have been in perfect condition to keep up the pace to the end as he did. It was not his fault the "Martyrs" went home empty-handed. Brown was too concerned about Bookman to render much assistance to his forwards, and Clarke played a much quieter game than the previous week. The forwards improved about two hundred per cent. in the second half, but the principal agents in attack were the extreme wingers, and there was not much to choose between them. They were fast and got the ball to the inside men many times, but the latter could not shoot at all well, although they showed quite a lot of skill in ball manipulation in the second half.

SKEFKO V. FLITWICK.

This match was played on Skefko's ground and ended in a draw of no goals. Play opened quietly and neither side seemed to get going until about 20 minutes after the start. Then the Skefko seemed to take control of the game and should have scored on three occasions, but failed owing to bad shooting. Play travelled from goal to goal after this till half-time.

The second half started well in favour of Flitwick, as they were kicking with the wind, but they could not score owing to the fine defence of the Skefko, which held the visitors out until the final whistle went with the score 0-0. This is Skefko's second draw against the villagers. The outstanding men on the Skefko side were White, Steedens, and Goodman.

BEDS. JUNIOR CUP.

1st Round, Competition Proper.

REPLAYED TIES.

Rosedale 5, Woburn United 0.

Lynton Works 3, Bedford Town Res. 0.