

WRECKED AT PLYMOUTH.

TOWN DEFEATED BY ODD GOAL.

At Plymouth:

PLYMOUTH ARGYLE 1 Goal.
LUTON TOWN Nil.

Plymouth Argyle.—Craig; Russell, Atterbury; Logan, Eastwood, Dickinson; Kirkpatrick, Raymond, Bowler, Toms, Heeps.

Luton Town.—Bailey; Lennon, Tirrell; Molyneux, Roe, Parker; Hoar, Higginbotham, Simms, Butcher, Bookman.

Referee: Mr. H. J. Weber, London.

"The error of one is the fault of all" is an aphorism that better applies to football than to most affairs. Certainly it would be easier to make a choice for exoneration than to allocate responsibility for Saturday's defeat at Plymouth. Let me at once say that there is no disgrace in losing by the only goal of the match at Home Park. The record of the "Pilgrims" is sufficient indication of the difficulty experienced by visiting teams in scoring goals. The Argyle supporters have not seen a goal scored against their side at Home Park since New Year's Day, and the occasion before that was on Nov. 20th. Yet I was not impressed with their defence. Indeed, I think the Town defenders played with more speed and polish, but they were not so fond of finding touch as were the Argyle backs. Candidly, in one sense I was disappointed with Russell, the International back, for although he was as cunning under pressure as any defender I have seen this season, he sent the ball among the spectators many times when there was no apparent necessity.

Nevertheless, the Town had sufficient chances to have won comfortably, quite apart from the

HARSH TRICKS OF FATE

and the fact that the referee failed to penalise the Argyle backs on two occasions when, in desperation, they handled the ball close to goal. In one instance Russell beat down the ball when it was breast high and Simms would have got to it, and the other occasion was in the last minute of the game, when Atterbury used his hands to tap the ball off Hoar's toe when the latter had run right in with it. It was, indeed, an unfortunate day for the Town, as no fewer than five of the players were temporarily put out of action. It was not a dirty game, by any means, but the Argyle played their own particular game, which means that they never held back through fear of hurting themselves or an opponent. Tirrell, Roe, Molyneux, Higginbotham and Parker all retired sore, but the only occasion when there was sign of a "breeze" was a little while before the end. Parker was heading the ball when Bowler dashed in and kicked. His foot caught Parker in the face and went over the Luton player's shoulder. Momentarily blind the Town centre-half threw off the Plymouth man and staggered away with his hands to his face, the crowd meanwhile yelling for him to be sent off—

A FOOLISH REQUEST.

Higginbotham was a passenger for the greater part of the second half, for he got a nasty kick in the back, and could only hobble about. Late in the game he exchanged places with Hoar, and had this move been made earlier, as Tirrell suggested, the result might have been different, for Hoar infused a lot of dash into his work and galloped through with Simms on several occasions.

On the run of the game in the first half the Argyle had slightly the better of the play, but in the second half, in spite of their handicap, the Town were much the better side, and the Argyle were in sore straits long before the finish. If it were merely a matter of counting chances, however, the Town should have won quite comfortably, but the finishing work was very poor, and instead of writing about the Argyle's narrow escapes I ought to be describing the getting of goals.

While I do not think the Argyle team on Saturday's form should ever beat the Town, several features of their game might well be copied by the Town. For instance, the defence took no risks whatever. They did not trouble about keeping the ball in play when there was even the

MILDEST OF THREATS

of danger. Out it went, and the whole of the defenders fell back to get it away from goal. The halves were certainly better than Luton's middle line, even if they were not so fast, and they fed their forwards better. The forwards, with the exception of Toms and Heeps, were rather a moderate lot, but the wingers performed the functions expected from them by centring the ball well in front of goal, and did not hold on too long. On the other hand, our backs were always trying to keep the ball in play. It was through this that the first goal came, for Lennon, after once robbing Heeps, tried to get the ball down the field, but Heeps recovered and passed to Toms, who put in a great drive along the ground. Bailey dived and made a really grand save, but the ball went to the foot of BOWLER, who had the easiest possible task, and could hardly have failed to score.

Our halves, too, were not shaping at all confidently, and quite early it was apparent to me that the changing of positions had left Parker unhappy. He held up his wing splendidly when he was on the spot, but he was anxious to be in the thick of it, and I am sure there would have been a great improvement had he and Roe exchanged places.

The forwards never got properly together. There was excellent work in midfield at times, but this

FINISHING WAS VERY POOR.

Bookman did not seem to care to trust himself at close quarters with Logan and Russell, and when he did get away, he centred badly. Once he beat the opposition in quite his best style, and Simms was waiting for the ball with the open goal to shoot at, but instead of tapping the ball in front, Bookman tapped it behind Simms, and Eastwood got it without any difficulty. On another occasion, Hoar ran round Atterbury in brilliant

fashion and dropped the ball across goal. Bookman headed well into the middle, Simms tapped the ball forward, and a goal seemed assured, but Craig somehow managed to get to it and lift it over the bar. The efforts in the second half were more disjointed owing to the injury to Higginbotham, but they still had plenty of chances, and would not take their courage in both hands and shoot. Certainly they did not get a lot of assistance from the rear, but some idea of the amount of pressure they exercised may be gathered from the fact that on one occasion Tirrell had a shot, and Craig only just managed to pull the ball down as it was sailing under the bar.

Bailey had not the slightest chance with the goal registered against him. His busiest period was early in the second half when he had to beat out a series of shots from close range, but Craig had quite as much to do, although the work was more evenly distributed over time. Tirrell again played splendidly at back, and in view of the heavy Easter programme, I think it would be wise to rest George Lennon. The

SCOT HAS MADE GOOD

with the crowd, and he is certainly a polished player, but he could, I think, do with a week's holiday. The end of the season is approaching, and players are bound to get stale, and Lennon is not playing with that vim and dash that characterised his play in the Cup-ties. I think it is only because he needs a holiday; a week away from training would probably work wonders with him. Molyneux should have had more than his week's rest. The game was wearing old before he struck his best, and then he came something near the standard when he was rightly regarded as the pick of the middle line. Billy is a rare player if wisely used, and the Easter games would have been quite soon enough for him. Parker played well in the first half, but the whole team would have been improved had he gone to centre half at half-time and allowed Roe to take the left half position. Clever as Roe is, and splendid as was his head work all through, he is too gentle for the pivotal position, and particularly against such bustling, eager men as the Argyle forwards. His best work came in the earlier half of the game.

The forwards were cleverer than the Argyle line in midfield, but in front of goal were not a bit more effective. Simms led them well, and was always trying, but even he did not shoot as often as he might have done. Had Higginbotham not got hurt, I think we should have won, for in the first half he had played the right game and hustled the backs to some tune. Once he forced his way through by a

MIXTURE OF STRENGTH AND SKILL, and could his courage and vigour have been available in the closing stages when the Argyle men were beaten back almost on to their goal line, there would have been a different story to tell. Butcher's footwork was as smart as usual, and both he and Simms tried hard to force a goal. Hoar was about the best forward in the first half, and he did a tremendous lot of initiatory work in the second when he was alone on the right wing, while when he changed places he infused a great deal of dash into the line and had very hard luck in being robbed of a goal when Atterbury handled in the last minute. If Bookman had centred as well as he ran, the home defence could not have hoped to keep a clean sheet, but he invariably placed the ball either out of play or behind his forwards, and thus wasted his best work.

The Argyle are a solid rather than a brilliant side. Their defence is traditional for stolidity, and although there is a considerable sprinkling of grey hair and some baldness, they knew each other's game, and they take very few risks. Craig is a fine goalkeeper, and Russell a powerful back. Atterbury, despite his long tally of summers, is still a sturdy player. Eastwood was lively in the middle line, but I do not think either Logan or Dickinson fast enough to hold Bookman and Hoar, and I shall be surprised if they are not led a rare dance at Luton. They were obviously tired before the finish. The best forward was Toms, the old Manchester United player. He was as lively as he was tricky, and the chief engineer in attack. Heeps did excellent work, and Kirkpatrick was useful, but neither Bowler nor Raymond shone to any great extent. They never reached the level of one bit of play by the Town just before the end of the game. In this movement, Parker, Simms, Butcher and Hoar joined, and they took the ball right into the Argyle goal, but only a corner resulted, and this was badly placed.

Mr. Weber was a London referee, and that says much. He appeared to be too much under the influence of the crowd. If he mistook the raucous schooling of the occupants of a rookery for the derision of the spectators, I cannot say, but he appeared exceedingly timorous of penalising the home team.

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