

FROM THE FOOTBALL FIELD.

PLAYER ORDERED OFF IN SIMMS' BENEFIT MATCH.

WHAT WAS THE ATTENDANCE?

Ernest Simms was on Saturday afternoon denied the satisfaction of commemorating an outstanding landmark in his football career by once more leading the Town team to victory as he did in the Cup tie at his native South Shields. It was the one thing wanting to make complete the success of the Luton centre forward's long and eagerly looked for benefit match. The weather, though blustery and threatening to be stormy, held out beautifully fine until after the game, a crowd that was well above the average for a Saturday League match towards the lag end of the season was eloquent testimony to the keen interest aroused on the occasion, and the demonstrative reception accorded the beneficiary spoke volumes for the popularity Simms has won by the goal-scoring abilities he has displayed during his association with the Town Club since eight years ago and more especially by his success in that direction this season. The Town centre did his best to repay his admirers in the coin they wished for. Inside five minutes he earned their plaudits by a characteristic demonstration of his brilliant scoring powers, and, whatever may be said about the game and its result, it was not his fault that he had to cry content with bringing up his League record to a quarter of a century. For at least half the game he did everything but score, and it was rather a scurvy trick of fate that denied him the delight of crowning the occasion by winning the match in the closing minutes.

From the financial standpoint, Simms' benefit is assured of easily surpassing the reward any other Town player has derived from the coffers of the Luton public. The directors guaranteed that his share of Saturday's "gate" should not fall below £400, and although the attendance is not likely to yield him anything in excess of that figure it is estimated that the joint efforts of the Simms' Benefit Fund Committee and the Supporters' Club Committee will enable that figure to be at least doubled. While it is not possible at the moment to say exactly how many tickets were sold for the estimating competition, the hon. secs. are hopeful that the number will work out at somewhere near 10,000. This would give nearly £500 in receipts, and although the committee's expenses may approach £100 there have been several handsome donations, and it is calculated that these, with the proceeds of subscription cards, and the Supporters' Club will bring up the amount available for Simms to close upon £500.

The estimating competition has naturally aroused much curiosity as to the attendance at Saturday's match, but as already announced in the "Reporter," the official figures and the prize winners will not be disclosed until the interval at the Exeter City match next Saturday. An indication of the strange ideas some people have of crowds is the fact that the estimates sent in range from 5,000 to 17,000, but the great bulk of them concentrate round about eight, nine and ten thousand, with a preponderance of the latter. There are freak figures galore, the chief favourites being 9999 and 11111, but it will probably be found that those who have gone a little over the 9,000 mark are in the running for the prizes. The whole of the estimate tickets were sorted by the committee into first thousands and hundreds on Thursday night, tied together in separate bundles, and placed in a sealed receptacle which will not be opened until after the opening of a sealed envelope, in which the Town Club Secretary will supply the official turnstile returns. It is hoped to arrange for the Mayor to attend a meeting of the committee this week, open both the sealed envelope and the receptacle containing the tickets and pick out the winning numbers, but the committee will be pledged to secrecy until the board is sent round the Town ground at next Saturday's match.

There has been some idea of presenting the cheque to Simms at the close of next Saturday's game, but it is thought it may not be possible to get all the accounts settled in that short time, and the presentation will in all probability be deferred.

The Red Cross Band on Saturday generously offered to give the proceeds of their collection at the match to the Benefit Fund, and also struck the happy idea of staying on the pitch after the teams took the field, and striking up "For he's a jolly good fellow" as Simms, escorted by Mr. Ernest Gibbs, advanced to the centre to toss. It was the signal for a great round of cheering, and thus he acknowledged by a series of quite graceful bows. He was leading the Cup team with the exception, Parker returning to centre half, and Walsh and Lamb being re-introduced for Molyneux and Roe. Plymouth's

only change was at centre forward, an old injury keeping out Bowler. Teams:--

Luton Town: Bailey; Lennon, Tirrell; Walsh, Parker, Lamb; Hoar, Higginbotham, Simms, Butcher, Bookman.

Plymouth Argyle: Craig; Russell, Atterbury; Logan, Eastwood, Dickinson; Kirkpatrick, Raymond, Sheffield, Toma, Heeps.

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

Plymouth were the first to get dangerous, and Tirrell had to be mighty smart in racing back and dribbling out for a corner after Lennon had rather badly miskicked. Sheffield and Raymond got clean through. Luton's first attack came after four and a half minutes from the left wing, and although Bookman's centre was not of the best Simms got the better of a tussle with Russell, and called upon Craig. The left wing brought the ball back, and getting possession from a throw in Butcher dribbled up to the goal line, worked along the goal line with wonderful control and trickery, and touched into the centre for Simms to take a first time lunge with the left. Craig was completely unsighted, and the ball flashed into the far corner, low down out of his reach. It was a glorious goal, and Butcher's share in it was large.

From this point, the Town took up the running strongly, and their attacks were so virile that the Argyle defenders had little rest. Parker had a winding drive saved just under the bar, Russell was extremely lucky to get in the way of a pile driver from Simms that was right on the target, Butcher sent in flat-baller into Craig's hands from a smart burst on the right, and Simms, hampered by Russell, sent a trifle wide following a clever run by the left. The Argyle also had other lucky escapes.

The Argyle were only twice dangerous in the first 35 minutes, Bailey smartly dealing with a long range drive from Toma, and deflecting on to the top of the net an awkward centre from Kirkpatrick but eight minutes before the interval a bad blunder by Lennon gave them an equaliser. The Scot had two chances to clear, but failed completely, and Sheffield gave a clear opening to Raymond, and although Tirrell made a great effort to cover up the blunder, and Bailey came out to try and limit the objective, the inside right found the net with a smart shot. Still the visitors were hard put to it to keep level up to the interval. First Butcher sent wide, from a lovely movement in which Bookman and Simms were also associated, then Simms hit the cross-bar with a rising shot from twenty yards' range, and there was more than a suspicion of Russell handling in clearing, and Bookman only missed by inches from a great run by Butcher.

The second half was quite another story, the Town players completely failing to reproduce their earlier form. The forward line was right off gear, and lacking in either understanding or method, and swinging the ball about freely, the Pilgrims were altogether the more dangerous. Both Lennon and Tirrell rendered good service in negotiating awkward looking shots, and Bailey had to run out yards to bar a dangerous looking run by Sheffield. Higginbotham, who had changed places with Hoar, was the outstanding figure in the Luton attack, and frequently got nice centres across, but they were rarely seized upon, and for half an hour the only approach to a home score was a shot from Hoar that rose just above the bar.

For the most part the exchanges were dull and lifeless until the last quarter of an hour, and then a rally by the homesters was met by such vigour on the part of the Argyle defenders that feelings became very ruffled, and roughness was much in evidence. This culminated in Higginbotham being knocked out by a very bad foul on the part of Atterbury, after the Luton player had parted with the ball, and at this the crowd on the Kenilworth Road terrace became so incensed and demonstrated in such pronounced fashion that Tirrell found it necessary to run across and reason with them. The nature of the demonstration had the effect of causing the referee to ascertain from the linesman details of what had occurred, and directly he learned of these, he gave marching orders to Atterbury, who met with a storm of booing as he left the field.

This incident had the effect of putting down further roughness, and with Higginbotham able to resume, the Town went out strongly for a winning goal. The Argyle were just as determined, and kept the play going from end to end fairly evenly, but in the last three minutes they had two remarkable escapes. From one of the few corners accurately placed by Bookman, first one and then another headed in. Craig had to come out to deal with one of these, and when Butcher got his head to the ball he seemed a certain scorer, but Craig got back in marvellous manner and saved the situation. Directly afterwards Higginbotham got away clear, and his centre left Craig helpless. It was, however, just a shade too far for Simms, and the ball trickled from his foot inches wide of the post, and left the final score

Luton, 1; Plymouth Argyle, 1.