

FIZZLING OUT ! BRISTOL ROVERS REPEAT PERFORMANCE

(By CRUSADER.)

On Saturday morning a supporter of the Town said to me, "We shall get beaten to-day. We can't do well with these old red shirts on." Of course, I would not hear of it, and even now I don't think the red shirts had anything at all to do with it. The end of all our hopes and aspirations (yes, I think so now) was due to mistaken tactics, ineffective forward play, and faulty goalkeeping. Mistaken tactics, because I think some of our players were too eager to remind the Rovers that they were playing a long way from the mud flats of Bristol. This was in the first half, but in the second half (the referee had appealed to both teams before turning out) they settled down to football, and it was in this period that the forwards failed once more to drive home the attacks they executed with such speed and skill. The question of the goals, well, I have no doubt, be as

KEENLY DISPUTED

as was that goal at Birmingham. In the first case Bailey came out of his goal, why I do not know, except that he thought it best, and he got in the way of a rattling shot from Sims, but the ball went to CHANCE, who hit it as hard as he could, and had the satisfaction of seeing it go into the net. The second goal came a quarter of an hour from the end. Norton got in a centre from the corner flag, and Bailey failed to punch the ball away. It fell at the feet of CHANCE, who easily netted. Only one other save was Bailey called upon to make in this half, and the Rovers were doing what they did at Bristol the previous week, packing their goal area and stopping Luton from shooting. As at Bristol, on the run of play it was an absurd result, but it serves to practically kill the last hope of promotion this season. Had we won we should have been nearer Southampton again, but there is a distinct danger of a drop much lower in the Table.

"The gentleman who makes excuses for the Town's failures," was a description applied to me the other day, but it would require a very remarkable Sherlock Holmes to discover a clue to an excuse for Saturday's defeat. Everybody except the Bristolians was bitterly disappointed, and the only shred of hope for promotion lies in the now practically impossible feat of collecting the whole of the points from the fifteen games to be played. This will not

BRISTOL ROVERS 2
LUTON TOWN 1

LUTON TOWN: — Bailey; Lennan, Tirrell; Foster, Roe, Miller, Hoar, Higginbotham, Simms, Mathie, n, Bookman.

BRISTOL ROVERS: — Barnes; Panes. Heydon; Boxley, Sims, Steele; Chance. Morgan, Ball, Liddell, Norton.

Referee: — Mr. T. J. Duke, London.

be done unless there is a radical improvement in the work of the forwards in front of goal. With the work in midfield I do not think anyone can find fault, however the seven forwards at disposal may be distributed. We have seven of them capable of out-manceuvring the best defences in the country so far as construction of attack as concerned, but in the matter of goal-scoring their efforts since December 31st have been

SINGULARLY UNSUCCESSFUL.

Players may differ as much as they like from my theory, but I am convinced that the fault lies in the fact that they do not shoot half as often, nor, not a quarter, the times they have the chances. They endeavour to walk the ball into the net every time, and it doesn't pay. Practically the only shot worthy the name scored, and why on earth all the inside men do not shoot in matches as they do in practice is a problem too deep for me. In every match there is the same tale, even when we have won, because we might have won by bigger scores, and in the games we have lost this season the result might have been reversed had the forwards taken a tithe of their opportunities.

Even allowing for the tricky nature of the ground on Saturday, the forwards failed miserably in front of goal. When I say that the second half of Saturday's game was very much like the whole of the game at Bristol on the previous Saturday, it may be imagined what a painful job it was to sit and watch. That is as much as one needs say about the forward work.

Of the middle line I say much the same as on the previous week. They played well enough for most people, and it was not their fault that the Town were defeated. Somebody told me that Walker was missed.

I will not affirm or contradict it, but I do think that Roe's efficiency is impaired by bringing him into the pivotal position. The visiting forwards could seldom make headway, and that was tribute to the quality of the Town's halves, each of whom played hard and well. It was

NO REFLECTION

whatever on Millar that his wing opponent scored both goals. In the first case, had Chance been where the average winger would have been he would not have scored, for he was in the middle of the field. No, Millar again did well enough to justify perseverance, and when he has learned to feed his wing better he will be a tip-top half. Foster was the pick of the trio.

Just before the first goal was scored Lennan mis-headed the ball, and gave Sims, the chance of a shot, but that was the only blemish on a good display, and Tirrell also played a strong game. Bailey was unfortunate, and he came in for such strong criticism that there is no need for me to continue it.

If the Town had taken four points out of the Rovers when they had been equally hard pressed we should all have said they deserved them. Let me say the same now. The Rovers, as on the previous Saturday, refused to admit defeat, and they worked hard and hopefully all the ninety minutes. They deserved their success for that reason, and not because of any superlative degree of skill. They know about as little of science as any team we have met, but they know the value of pegging away, and have as much courage as any team, and in that lay their main virtue. Barnes again had some luck that was deserved, and although Panes and Heydon were not comparable with Lennan and Tirrell in point of skill, they were hard workers and difficult obstacles. As at Bristol, Sims was the best half-back on the side. Steele was the least scrupulous, and Boxley was the most comical. The number of times he kicked the ball out of play was extraordinary, and I doubt if he ever made a single effort to give his forwards a chance. Yet he served a winning purpose. Of the forwards, young Chance, who did so well in the Reserves' team at Luton the previous week, was again in good form, and with Norton shared the honours.