

Football's Opening.

(BY "OLD CROCK.")

TOWN'S DEARLY-WON VICTORY AT NORWICH.

CENTRE-HALF IN HOSPITAL.

Once more the opening of the football season has brought a shadow across the path of the Luton Town Club. Last year an almost new team started in the Third Division with that never-to-be-forgotten 9-1 defeat at Swindon, and twelve months ago to-day followed up with the loss of Watson, the goalkeeper, with a dislocated shoulder. On Saturday an old and tried eleven went to Norwich and won—a feat I do not remember Luton to have ever before achieved at "The Nest" of the Canaries, but unhappily the price paid for this success was that the team had to leave Tommy Parker behind at the Norwich and Norfolk Hospital with what is feared to be a broken leg.

There was only about a quarter of an hour left for play when the misfortune occurred, and it appeared to be the result of a pure accident. Parker and Scott, the City centre half, went for the ball together within the centre circle and came into heavy collision. Scott tips the beam at 15 stone, and Parker evidently must have received a kick from him, for as he went down like a log, an ominous snap could be heard all over the ground. A doctor was quickly out to examine the Town player, and he formed the opinion that his right leg had been broken just below the knee, and advised that the best course was his immediate removal to hospital. The injured leg was accordingly put into splints before Parker was removed from the playing field on a stretcher, and the player was then conveyed to hospital by the Norwich City chairman in his motor-car. Parker was in frightful agony as he lay on the ground, but after the leg had been put into splints and bandaged, he felt much more comfortable. At hospital on Saturday evening he said he was feeling little or no pain, and seemed pretty confident that the leg was not broken, but this is not the general view. In any case, the doctor who is in charge of him has promised to make an X-ray examination to-day. It is a serious blow to the Club, for if the leg is fractured the probabilities of the player being of any further use this season are rather remote. It is doubly unfortunate for him from the fact that his misfortune was the climax of a particularly fine display.

The mishap held up the game for something like six minutes, and it was obvious that it had a depressing effect on both players and spectators. Before the game ended some of the spectators had to be carried off by police in a fainting condition.

HOW THE GAME RAN.

Luton relied on the same side that played together in the practice games, but injuries in the practice matches caused the Canaries to be without Gray, the back who did not miss a game last year, and Stoakes, a successful sprinter and hurdler from Newark, who has played outside left for Notts County as an amateur, and is making his first appearance as a professional this season. The City had three new faces in Scott, a centre half who has been with Manchester City for the last eight years, Bertram, an inside right from Newcastle United, and Whing, a centre forward from the Gatehead district. Teams:

Luton Town: Bailey; Lennon, Tirrell; Molyneux, Parker, Walsh; Hoar, Butcher, Shims, Mathieson, Bookman.

Norwich City: Skermer; Hope, B. G. Smith; Wilkinson, Scott, Martin; Austin, Bertram, Whing, Booth Woodhouse.

Referee, Mr. T. J. Duke, Harlesden.

Luton started down the slope before over 11,000 spectators, but had to face a glaring sun. Bailey was the first to be called upon, but the first real escape was at the other end, Butcher getting clean through and pushing the ball yards wide of the post with only Skermer to beat. All the best combined work was coming from Hoar and Bookman, and

Skermer effected sparkling saves from Simms and Butcher, while just before the interval Simms was not above three yards from goal when he met a centre from Hoar at the volley, only to direct the ball at the very end the goalkeeper was guarding. Bailey was not seriously called upon for the greater part of the half, and the City were lucky to cross over with no goals.

Immediately on the restart, Booth raised the spectators' hopes with a brilliant dribble, but his shot was easily saved by Bailey, and a minute later the Town right got away, and Mathieson took the centre with his right as it came across, and hooked it into goal. Skermer got to the ball, but failed to hold it, and could not recover it until it had given Luton the lead. Norwich played up desperately to try and level matters, but met a defence that never wavered, and Bailey was not often called upon and only once seriously tested. The Town were displaying infinitely superior football and even after the loss of Parker their lead was never in danger. Walsh went centre-half, and Hoar was withdrawn from the forward line, but the remaining four kept the City defence as busy as ever. Simms, however, let Skermer off again when splendidly placed, and so the result was:

Norwich City 0, Luton 1.

TRIUMPH AND TRAGEDY.

ALL ABOUT LUTON TOWN'S VISIT TO NORWICH.

Tommy Parker was my neighbour at lunch in the Great Eastern dining car as we sped along to Norwich last Saturday. He took me into his confidence, showed me the good resolutions he had inscribed in his note-book, his plans and his hopes for the season, and we had a real good talk. Alas, "the best laid schemes of mice and men gang aft a-gley," says Scotland's own bard, and when we returned to London on the same train we left Tom Parker in a bed at the Norfolk and Norwich Hospital.

We were unhappy even in the hour of a victory that was well and truly won by a better team, and of that team none was better than Parker. Victory was bought too dearly was the general sentiment, and, harking back twelve months to an otherwise unmentionable experience at Swindon, Ernest Simms expressed the common sentiment when he said that he would rather have suffered the indignity of that day many times over than have left Tommy behind in such plight. It was a stunning blow to all of us, from the directors down to my insignificant self.

The accident occurred 17 minutes from the end, at a time when the Town's display had numbed the enthusiasm of the crowd and had brought the City players to a state approaching desperation, and the confidence of the Luton men was reflected in their play. The ball came down the field and Scott kicked it forward. Parker pounced on it and pushed it past him as the Norwich player crashed into him, and there was at the same moment a crack that was heard all over the ground. With one cry Parker fell, and Scott at once dropped beside him and raised him in his arms. It was obvious that the right leg was broken near the top of the shin, for the bone formed an elbow. Billy Lawson covered the ground as he has not covered it for many a long day, and my old friend Arthur Latham, the City trainer, was a good second. Then the ambulance men, police, and a doctor, and Messrs. Ernest Gibbs and Oscar Hart, the Town directors, went across also. With rough splints of wood the leg was made as comfortable as possible in a few minutes, and Parker was carried on a stretcher to the dressing rooms. Mr. E. Morse, the Chairman of the City Club, had his motor car at the entrance, and personally drove the victim to hospital, Mr. Gibbs accompanying in a taxi. Within a few minutes Tommy was in bed, and Mr. Gibbs remained with him, making necessary arrangements until the time came to leave. He interviewed the doctor, and the latter, an old Rugby footballer of note, assured him that everything possible would be done for the Town player, that the X-rays would be used on the limb on Monday, and if it were possible Tommy should be brought to Luton next week. Mr. and Mrs. Latchmore, of Hitchin, had motored to Norwich, and the former made arrangements to stay overnight and see Tommy to-day, and Mr. Arthur Heley, the President of the Harriers, had motored over to see the game, and he also remained behind, so that Tommy will not lack for the presence of friends for a day or two. I hope to be able to give latest news of his progress in this issue in another column.

Scott, who has come to Norwich after eight years with Manchester City, was very much upset over the mishap. He held Tommy in his arms and expressed his regret. When the game was restarted he seemed incapable of running after the ball, and after a few moments left the field for about five minutes. After the game he told me that he hardly knew what to do with himself. He said he would do all that he possibly could to make Tommy's stay at Norwich comfortable.

I give these facts fully because I do not want to do Scott or any other player an injustice, but Norwich City have a reputation for virile play, and their team on Saturday lived up to it. There was no hesitation and too much risky play, largely due to the different styles, for while Luton relied on skill and combination, Norwich adopted kick and rush tactics. In the first half I thought these methods would succeed, for the Town defenders were frequently subjected to fierce attacks, and the forwards were hustled very unceremoniously. Consequently the ball was too often in the air, and when it did touch Mother Earth there was plenty of boot in readiness. There are times when the "kick and rush" policy pays, but it needs to be applied with due regard to the rules of the game and some regard for personal safety. One or two of the City players were recklessly daring, and not always above suspicion. It was unfortunate for Scott that he had to be spoken to by the referee for a foul on Butcher, but he was less prone to indiscretion than Hope, a big, raw-boned back who took Gray's place, and showed no quarter at any time. Once Simms was banged over from behind, and there should have been a penalty, while he brought Hoar down very roughly just before the end, and also upset Bookman. The other players, while pursuing the vigorous policy, were more scrupulous than he.

For half an hour Norwich had slightly the better of the game, but from then the Town were the better side all round. Their defence was just as thorough and resolute, but played with greater safety and judgment; the middle men were not quicker on the ball perhaps, but they used it to far better advantage, while the forward line worked with altogether more skill and combination. The only goal of the game came in the second minute after the interval. Following rather desultory play on the right, Butcher beat Smith for possession, and dropped the ball cleverly into the middle. MATHIESON was on the spot, and taking the ball hip high he crashed it with terrific force into goal. Skermer's gallant effort was unavailing, for the ball forced his hands back and then whizzed round the net and fell behind him. He made an effort to get it away, but the referee was on the spot and the goal was ours.

From this point onwards the Town often

looked like increasing the lead, but at the other end Bailey was seldom tested, and he was quite safe.

This was the first defeat Norwich had sustained at home for eleven months, and it was unexpected. Their side has, undoubtedly, been strengthened, and few teams will take points from the "Nest." Skermer is a very fine goalkeeper, with a nice gift of anticipation and shrewd judgment. Hope will be a forlorn hope unless he purges his style. Of magnificent physique, he has a good kick in his boots, but he needs tuition. The amateur, Smith, lacked nothing in strength, but he was clean and clever, and broke up many attacks. The halves are big fellows, with any amount of grit, good spoilers too, but could not feed the men in front. The forwards were fast and individually smart, but they showed little ability to blend. Booth and Austin were the pick.

For the Town Bailey showed his very best form in goal, and never made a mistake. Once in the second half he saved thrice in quick succession in a hot attack, and on this form he is the goalkeeper. The backs were level, and only two errors were made during the game—once in the first half, when the pair went for the ball together, and then both retreated, and in the second half, when Tirrell back-heeled the ball to an opposing forward and gave Whing a good chance to run through, but the centre forward was overhauled by Parker. Both played splendid football, never missing a kick in spite of the tricky nature of the ground and the live'y ball, and they played with resolution and confidence. Parker was the star of the middle line. He had Whing's wings clipped all through, and Booth and Bertram could make little headway against him, while he plied his forwards cleverly. Molyneux was a little time in settling down, but after the first hur'y-burly he settled down to a steady, clean game, and he tended Butcher and Hoar very nicely, having a large share in their effectiveness. Walsh worked with his customary vigour. He, too, found Austin elusive early on, but as the game progressed he became quicker on the ball, and his worrying tactics were very successful. When he has learned to feed the men in front of him Walsh should be a very reliable half. The forwards were bothered by the manner the ball was kept in the air by the opposition, but when they got it down they usually made ground with it. They were faster than the home halves, and had cleverer feet, and only the wholehearted way in which the home defence played kept the score down to the odd goal. Hoar and Butcher were the more attractive wing, moving with more precision and pace, and Butcher's embroidery was both serviceable and attractive. George made a hash of one good opening because the ball was on the wobble, but he made openings for others and never spared himself the whole of the time. He is a marvel of perfect condition. Sid Hoar got the better of many tussles with Smith and Martin, in spite of the energetic game both played, and he centred well, too. Simms was closely followed, and although his opportunities to shoot were considerably limited, his distribution was good. Mathieson's footwork was smart, but the usefulness of the left wing was diminished by the narrow ground, and it was not safe for any player to operate close to the touch-line, for there was very little space between the line and the wall. Bookman took no risk of a broken head in the first half, but did much better in the second, when the line became more machine-like than previously.

Considering the warmth of the weather, the players all round kept up a hot pace, and the fact that they finished fit, if warm, was a testimonial to their trainers.

Mr. Duke handled the game very well, but gives one the impression that he is too lenient, and he needs to exercise a sterner hand on offenders by constructing his views on dangerous play.

The game was witnessed by about 10,000 spectators, and quite a sporting crowd they were. When Parker got hurt many spectators had to be carried off in a fainting condition.

The Nest is utterly unsuitable for games involving the keenness of Division III. matches. It is well-nigh impossible to describe. At the top of the slope rises a steep hill that is terraced and affords standing room for thousands, but at the rear of the goal itself is a rock, close to the back of the net. On one side is a big grand stand that stretches nearly the length of the field and that affords excellent accommodation. On the opposite side is a vacant space for a thousand or two, but lower there are cottage walls, with a few standing spaces accommodating a few dozen people. Behind the lower goal there is a big drop, and cottage bedrooms are almost level with the pitch. A long stretch of barbed wire would prevent a player in a hurry from diving into the bedrooms. It is all right as a "Canaries" nest—if the occupants were always canaries.

Norwich.—Skermer; Hope, Smith; Wilkinson, Scott, Martin; Austin, Bertram, Whing, Booth, Woodhouse.

Luton Town.—Bailey; Lennon, Tirrell; Molyneux, Parker, Walsh; Hoar, Butcher, Simms, Mathieson, Bookman.

BAILEY HILL BROTHERHOOD v. TOTTERHAM.

On London-road Recreation Ground on Saturday the Brotherhood played their first League game and won it by the only goal of the game. The teams were evenly matched, but the high wind sadly marred attempts to combine. The "Brothers" did better in the second half, but the goal came from a penalty kick, McFadden scoring with ease. It was a nice game and well controlled by Mr. S. Kilby. McFadden and Skinner, the home backs, were the pick of the side, but the forwards lacked understanding or the margin of victory might have been much wider. Brotherhood:—Smith; Skinner, McFadden; Bone, Briars, Emerton; Burgoyne, Dillingham, Toyer, Fletcher, Bennett.