

THE LEAGUE—DIV. III.

LUTON'S THRILLING FINISH.

(By CRUSADER).

LUTON TOWN 4 goals
NEWPORT COUNTY Nil

LUTON TOWN.—Bailey; Lennon, Tirrell; Molyneux, Walker, Roe; Hoar, Higginbotham, Bimma, Mathieson, Bookman.

NEWPORT COUNTY.—Cooper; Arch, Flinders; Price, E. Edwards, Groves; W. F. Edwards, Dobson, Devlin, Lythgoe, Blott.

Referee: F. Todman, Croydon.

An excellent result—on paper. It is safe to assume, however, that of the 9,000 spectators, very few did not feel a bit sorry for the Welshmen. After the unfortunate Cooper gave the Town the first goal, the visitors had quite as much of the ball as the "Lilywhites," and at frequent intervals threatened to win. For quite lengthy spells they showed the more skill and enterprise, and could they have finished as smartly as they conceived and executed movements, there might well have been a different tale. For twenty minutes in the second half Newport were the better side absolutely, and the Town's play was coarse in comparison, and had the home backs wavered in this period, the goal would assuredly have fallen. After fighting so manfully for 85 minutes, it was hard to be debited with three goals in four minutes, and it is quite safe to assume that Newport will not be called upon to endure such an experience for many a long day. But the Town forwards touched their absolute best in that exhilarating five minutes, and the pity of it all is that they cannot maintain that standard in all their games for the whole time. If they could we should not need to guess twice to give the name of the side to win promotion. Previous to that, however, a stranger entering the ground in the second half would have guessed Luton the losing side, so haphazard was their work, while on the other hand the dapper and dashing forwards of Newport were continually raiding. It is quite true that Cooper had more work to do than Bailey, but the advances of the Town were nearly always the result of the individual forward, whereas the Newport forwards swung the ball about and passed often with clockwork precision. It was a fidgety time for all of us, for it seemed that Newport could not maintain such a pace without reward. And it was not until the second goal that we felt anything like certain of keeping the points. The first goal came at the end of 15 minutes' play. Hoar had put in a long shot which Cooper fielded safely enough. Harry Higginbotham, however, who was prowling round, went click for the goalkeeper. The latter kicked the ball on to Higginbotham's body, from which it went into the net. Cooper amply atoned for this blunder in subsequent play, his judgement making tense moments for the spectators quite simple for himself, and if the men in front of him never reached the superlative, they maintained the steady routine, and fought every inch of ground with a tenacity that kept the Town forwards unsettled and discomfited. And the visiting forwards

unwisely and often they covered half the field without a Toton player being able to discover them. Had they been able to rush the Town forward as smartly as they came through midfield, they would probably have beaten Bailey. They played superior football for a long time, and the home supporters began to get a bit irritated. Bailey earned a din of approval when he left his charge and robbed W. Edwards after the latter had run half the length of the field and was splendidly cleared, but the Town goalkeeper blocked the ball with his feet as Edwards shot, and had the satisfaction of seeing it go for a corner. Devlin also fired in several good shots, but Bailey was in good form. Most of us were thinking how lucky we were to be drawing when Roe slipped the ball through the middle to Simms and Mathieson. They beat the defence very cleverly and Simms tapped the ball through for MATHIESON to find the net with a shot that glanced off the post. The Town forwards now gave of their very best, and Simms and Mathieson again combined in a close movement that carried them through, and SIMMS shot with great force to beat Cooper to the world. The transformation scene was not complete for the ball was taken to the other end, but as quickly returned, and Hunt got through on the right to centre MATHIESON rushed between the backs and got to the ball just before Cooper, and scored the fourth goal. It was a finish such as had never been expected by any of the players or spectators, and, needless to say, it made amends for much of the poor stuff that had preceded, and probably lifted a load from the minds of the directors for they could not have been satisfied with what had gone before.

Newport have a very useful side. I shall be surprised if they do not figure fairly prominently in the League table, for if they are not a big side they are sturdy and industrious, and the forwards have quite an intelligent understanding. Cooper's error was just that sort of mishap that happens to the best of goalkeepers. He had no chance with the other goals, and he saved many times when he would have been excused had he failed. Arch is a smart little back, and he and Flanders were good so long as the home forwards tried to get goals by putting the ball forward and running for it, but they were not good enough to deal with our inside forwards when the ball was kept on the carpet. The middle line were worriers, and played steadily, but the forward line was the best part of the team. Edwards showed speed and skill on the extreme right, and Dobson worked for him in brainy and unselfish fashion, while Devlin held his men together well. Lythgoe and Blott did many useful things without ever reaching brilliance.

For the Town the defence again proved its worth, and Bailey wins more confidence in each game. He is getting more judicious, and does not hesitate to run out when occasion demands. If not reaching their best, both Lennon and Tirrell put up a strong defence, and covered each other fairly well. One hesitates to say much about the middle men, for Walker was handicapped by lameness. Roe more than justified his inclusion, and he gave Bookman and Mathieson more assistance than they have ever had. Indeed, he got as much applause as any player on the field. Molyneux and Walker were useful, but both have played better. The forwards were most provoking. Now and then they would scatter the visitors' defence and

work up strong attacks, which they were never able to drive home. They got impatient with each other, and, curiously enough, most of Cooper's work was entailed by heading. In the last stages they showed just what they are capable of, and by keeping the ball down more than at any other period of the game, they quite nonplussed the visiting defence. Mathieson's wonderful footwork met with its reward, and nothing better than the work of the line in the concluding stages could be desired. It must not be forgotten that the ground conditions are all against attractive forward play, for the ball is too lively to be consistently controlled. The team all round will do much better when the ground is softer.