

LUTON V. NEWPORT COUNTY.

LUTON TOWN 4 Goals
NEWPORT COUNTY Nil.

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

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

Referee: F. Todman, Croydon.

Often when called upon to explain away a defeat, I have been bluntly told that the result is everything, and the means to it are of little concern, and that the better team is the winning team. Yet, I suppose, if I were to say that the Town were the better side in this game, a very large percentage of those who saw it would write me down a red hot partisan, or something worse. When I was asked why the Town lost at Southampton and replied that we should have brought away at least one point, I was told not to take that line, because it was hardly conceivable. I like to give credit and praise where it is due, and so I say that if the Town deserved to win on Saturday against Newport, they should have won with ease against Southampton. Newport displayed better quality of football in a quarter of an hour on Saturday, than the whole of the 22 players at Southampton on the previous Monday had shown in 90 minutes. Yet were crushed, beaten to the wide world, if one must judge only by results. But if the Town do not give a better display at Newport next Saturday than they did last Saturday at home, I fancy there will be disagreeable reading next Saturday night when the "Telegraph" comes out. I do not, however, anticipate a heavy defeat at Newport, for, thank Heaven, we have had some rain, and I share the views of the players that they will do far better when the English climate has returned to normal pulse. It may be argued that other teams are equally hopeful. That is more than probable, but I am convinced that we shall not see the Town forwards on their very best behaviour until the grounds have renewed the elasticity one expects during the football season. And not only the forwards, but the half-backs will appreciate the difference. This is being written before the Exeter game, and before one can estimate the effect of the rain, but I think a great deal more will be required before the players are satisfied. There was about as much nature in the Town ground on Saturday as on a tram track, and only here and there could one pick out a player capable of controlling the ball with a respectable degree of skill. And most of these figured in Newport's forward line. There was a wide difference between the efforts of the local players and the easy manner in which the Newport forwards kept the ball on the ground as they raided the Town goal, and their work won much more admiration than that of the Town forwards. Yet they failed to score, and what kudos the Town forwards lost was secured by the defence. Not until those who leave early to avoid the crush, were beginning to edge towards the exits, did the Town become a really effective side, and then they showed the visitors what might have been—earlier.

On the whole, it was a sporting sort of game, with little to cavil about in the way of impropriety, but there was little skill, and for a long period in the second half the Town seemed doomed to defeat. Then in five minutes they compelled hundreds of people to retract many bitter remarks, and sent them on their way rejoicing. The laugh was with the players, perhaps, but they will be wise to find similar form earlier in the game, for they will not repeat Saturday's feat in a hurry.

The first goal was a lucky one, but HIGGINBOTHAM deserves credit for his shrewdness. He rushed in when Cooper saved from Hoar after fifteen minutes' play, and the goalkeeper threw the ball against him, and it rebounded into the net. Then the Town had rather the better of the exchanges until a few minutes after the cross-over, when Newport took up the running in deadly earnest and strove gallantly and unceasingly for the equaliser that did not come. And in the last fateful five minutes we had three goals as a result of clever combination by the Town forwards, and good shots by MATHIESON and SIMMS for the second and third goals, and then a capital run and centre by Hoar, and a smart bit of opportunism by MATHIESON that was unexpected by the visitors, put on the fourth goal.

There is no need to go deeply into the merits of the players. Newport, for a long time, played well enough to merit a draw at least, and they were unfortunate to be mulcted in such a defeat. It won't often happen to them so badly as on Saturday. Their best players were Cooper, Arch, E. Edwards, W. Edwards, Dobson and Devlin. The Town defence again put up a good show. Bailey's position in goal is secure on present form, and Lennon and Tirrell are all there, but the halves need strengthening.

Roe was the best on Saturday, but Walker played wonderfully well considering that he was suffering great pain owing to a damaged knee. Molyneux has yet to reach his last season's best, but it is probable that the change in the line has affected his play, and he will become more settled as the line settles. Forward, one could not pick out any as outstanding, but Hear had the merit of consistency, and one of these days we shall probably find that he has become a half-back. He is well on top of his form, but on Saturday did not get as much work as usual. Higginbotham, who has by no means fully recovered from his injury, was useful, and Mathieson and Simms were clever in epaume, while Bookman had more work than usual, thanks to Roe's feeding, but he has played far better, and he has not yet touched his best of last season.