

# LUTON'S HAPPY DAY.

A happier crowd has not been heard on Luton Town ground this season than on Saturday when the referee played his final tune and the players hurried out of the pouring rain to the dressing-rooms. It was a great victory, well and truly earned against odds. Portsmouth had played ten matches without suffering defeat, and yet Luton had to face them with a side bereft of three principal attackers, and an experi-



ment in the middle line. However Portsmouth fancied their chances, they were quite disillusioned before they had been long on the field, for the Town started full of beans, or the equivalent, and none could grudge them the fruits of their labour and enterprise.

As a spectacle, the game was good enough in the first half, or at least equalled in interest almost any game we have had on the ground this season, but when WALSH, of all folk, had the audacity to score a clipping goal after 40 minutes' play Portsmouth got rattled, and the game came nearer to the Rugby code than in any previous match during the last two seasons. The ball seemed to become a secondary consideration, and the Town forwards and halves were subjected to a lot of pushing, tripping, and jumping. Most of it was taken in good part, but a joke may be too practical and carried too far. The spectators thought so, and did not hesitate to let the Portsmouth players and the referee know what they thought of the contemptuous manner in which the laws of the game and the spirit of sportsmanship were flouted. Fortunately there was no very nasty spill, although Probert once crashed into Higginbotham when the latter was on the point of shooting, and as a result both had to receive first aid, and Higginbotham had to retire for a few moments.

It was all the more regrettable that the visitors descended to such tactics because they showed in the first half that they were capable of really good football. Perhaps they might have kept it up had they been successful when Stringfellow hit the bar, but it is open to question, so many and palpable were the infringements they committed in the second half. And the annoyances did not cease when the referee gave warnings to Hoten, Martin, Cherrett, and Wilson. Fortunately, the home team kept their heads, and, when allowed, their feet, and they never lost their grip on success when Walsh had scored. Sid Hoar scored a capital goal in the second half after the whistle had wrongly signalled for offside, while Bassett, Higginbotham, and Butcher all came very near to scoring.

The activity of the "Lilywhites" was more than the Portsmouth defenders could cope with, and had there been a little more steadiness in front of goal, the margin of success would have been greater. Robson made several capital saves, but might have had a lot more to do had the Town inside men been more accurate in shooting. It was here that one felt the need for a quicker man than Walsh, who could not weld the attack. Even so, the raids were much more dangerous than those of "Pompey," and the task of the visiting defenders was much more distressing than that imposed upon the Town defence.



Bassett and Hoar were very energetic and thrustful, and although the ex-Watford man did not get the ball in front with the accuracy of Hoar, he was always troublesome, and his understanding with Butcher excelled anything else on the field. The little pair made light of the heavy opposition, and badgered the visitors continually. Higginbotham's weight was handy in the front line, and, apart from attending well to Hoar, his sturdy thrusts for goal and his assistance to the half-backs were more than useful. Walsh was not quick enough for a leader, but his goal was a gem, and evoked the biggest cheer we have heard on the Town ground this season.

The key to success, apart from the wholehearted manner in which everyone worked, was in the soundness of the middle line. Just for one period in the first half Portsmouth seemed to have the measure of the Town's half-backs, but, speaking generally, the tenacity and vigilance of Foster, Walker and Roe was too much for the Portsmouth forwards. Foster was an undoubted success, and he worked with skill and dash throughout the piece, while Walker and Roe again gave of their very best. The backs were rocklike in their opposition, and Lennon reduced the left wing to impotence, while Tirrell's judicious rushes changed the run of play time and again. Bailey had not a lot to do, but made several masterly saves, and had no small share in the victory.

Portsmouth have a serviceable side. With the exception of Stringfellow, whose reputation is made, there was no forward of unusual gifts. The little man did the best work. Cherrett was a comparative failure, and Hoten was erratic, while the wingers could make little headway. The half-backs were a tough lot, with a faculty of refusing to acknowledge defeat; but their tactics were too unscrupulous. Probert and Abbott were strong at back, the latter in particular, and Robson did splendid work in goal.

Mr. Farrow's experiences as a referee have not been happy, and on this occasion he showed little ability to handle the game.