

ON THE SAME RUNG.

By defeating Southend United at Luton by three goals clear Luton Town managed to retain their position as third on the League chart. Our rivals in chief at the moment are Plymouth Argyle and Southampton, and each managed to win away from home, and so maintain precedence by keeping two points ahead. There is no need, therefore, to go into figures on goal average, but it is only voicing the general opinion to state that had the Town forwards got three times the number of goals their share of the game would not have been exaggerated. To put it mildly, the ineptitude of the forwards in front of goal exasperated the spectators as much as it cheered the visitors—the poorest side seen on the Town ground this season.

It is a remarkable fact that the smarter and more reputable the defence in opposition the better the Town play, and the Southend defence, as a whole, was very poor. The Town forwards found practically no difficulty whatever in beating the middle line and in getting within easy striking distance, but they could not beat Capper, and chance after chance was frittered away. The respectability of the score was due to the fact that SIMMS had a penalty shot—and it could not be called a really good one, since it hit the bar en route to the net—while FOSTER was the first half-back to get a goal, this coming from a corner kick and the resultant scrimmage, and to a bungling mess by the Southend defence when TIRRELL got through a free-kick from 40 yards' range. Considering that the Town were monopolising the game for about 80 of the 90 minutes, the goal-scoring alone demonstrates the puerility of the forwards in finishing.

Southend invariably make the game a scramble, but the hesitancy of the Town forwards and the delay in shooting was undoubtedly responsible for the Seaside's going home with as light a loss as they did. I am not overlooking the fact that nine clubs in that Division have had more goals scored against them than Southend. With all possible credit to the defence, the Town ought to have had a substantial lead over any team in the Division. If goals cannot be obtained at home, how is it possible to justly expect them to come away from home? We all know perfectly well what football is to-day, and how the advantage of ground seems to increase rather than otherwise, and it is worth noting that the Town defence has only once been penetrated at home—and that over two months ago. The other nine goals scored against us have come on "foreign soil."

It is often argued that it is no good the Town forwards scoring goals at home if the defence lose goals away, but if we have to rely on the defenders to prevent goals both at home and away and to get goals at home the argument is not worth much. There cannot be, on present form, any severe criticism of the defence. The department unsatisfactory to-day is the forward line, and whatever truth there may be in rumours of transfers consequent upon discontent among players, one can hardly credit that the fabulous sums alleged to have been offered are the result of goal-scoring feats within the past six weeks. The directors have the responsibility of finding the best line of attack, and the main consideration is goal-scoring. We can afford to lose the finer points of the game for a time if we get goals—for goals mean promotion.

The above grouse is well off one's chest, and I hope to see the Town forwards, whether the line is changed or not, show the Southend team next Saturday what should have been at Luton. In midfield there was no comparison. The skill of the Town forwards was a long, long way in advance of that of the Seaside's, and the disparity between the two lines of halves was even more pronounced. Simms led the line in his best style, but shot no better than the others. Butcher found the rather greasy turf more suitable to his style than in any previous game, and was the smartest of the inside trio for doing things—except in shooting. Mathieson was again off colour except at intervals, when he would waltz round an opponent and give Hoar the daintiest of passes. Bassett did a few good things, but I would not assert an improvement by the exclusion of Bookman. Hoar was the cleverest and most useful of the two forwards, and gave a fine display. If any player on the Luton side ever deserved an International cap it is the Leagrave lad. I don't think there is a better winger in the South, and if there is a better in the Kingdom I should like to see him.

The Town halves played wonderful football, and quite controlled the centre of the field. Not only in spoiling, but in feeding also, they were superb, and all three did so well that it would be unjust to exalt one above the others. The backs were strong and sure, as usual, and Bailey did his duty well.

Southend owed a lot to Capper for his gallant resistance, and he deserved the special mention he got. The backs were good compared with the rest of the team, but not brilliant. The halves were poor and prone to commit minor offences. Harris was the only forward of any real merit, and he ploughed a lonely furrow.

LUTON TOWN 3
SOUTHEND UNITED 0

LUTON TOWN. — Bailey; Lennon, Tirrell; Foster, Walker, Roe; Bassett, Butcher, Simms, Mathieson, Hoar.
SOUTHEND UNITED. — Capper; Dellow, Evans; Wileman, Lawrence, Martin; Harris, Reid, White, Hawarden, Kettle.
Referee. — R. Callick, London.