

SWANS PLUCKED.

We waited the coming of Swansea with some degree of trepidation. Things had been unsettled all the week. Foster was nursing the effects of his first visit to Southend-on-Sea. Walker and Higginbotham were in bed owing to severe chills, and, more unsettling than these things, perhaps, was the suspension of Strams and Mathieson. The absence of a colleague through injury may often act as a spur to a side, but to know that a colleague is fit and well, but cannot take his place in the side owing to some sort of friction in the relations between club and player, is not calculated to inspire a team. On the other hand, it is apt to fret nerves. Under these circumstances, Swansea may well have felt confident that they would take the points away from Luton.

But to mitigate the defections, the Town team had an impulse of a different kind. It was Sid Hoar's benefit match, and among all who are interested in Luton football to-day, there is an eagerness to make the benefit a record success, and the other ten players were just as keen and anxious as Hoar. They realised that if they were working against a handicap, there was also a special incentive to success, and they went into their task with courage and resolution. They were bound to win, and to win thoroughly, and balancing the actual goal-scoring chances and the hard luck they experienced, then they would have got nothing more than their deserts had they won by double the margin. Please note, you who saw the game, that on measurement of actual merit I do not claim a six goals superiority for the Town.

The Welshmen have a most serviceable side, and a forward line capable of high-class football. Indeed, if the remainder of the team were as skilful as the front line, Swansea might be occupying the top rung of the League ladder. It was because the middle and last lines of defence were not of the same quality as the forwards that Swansea lost by three goals clear. Yet even the vanguard was deficient in finishing work. The intelligence displayed in midfield was as good as anything we have seen since the war, and attractive enough to make us covetous, but hesitation and poor marksmanship marred constructive skill, and, in common with all crowds, Luton supporters find more pleasure in a single successful thrust than in a score of artistic thrills. A plebeian trait, certainly, but we would not alter it.

It was the policy of simple directness of aim and concentration on a single objective that won the game, and every player on the winning side had been infected with the bacillus of enthusiasm. The "Swans" policy of a flying start was countered by a series of quick, rapier-like thrusts, and twice the goal would have been penetrated had there been a difference of inches when Hoar crashed the ball against the upright, and Higginbotham smote the bar, and then there was that instance when Higginbotham sent the ball among the clouds when a gentle tap would have opened the score. It was in stemming another of these incisive raids that Robson handled, and HOAR took the spot kick and lashed the ball into the net after thirteen minutes' play. Nineteen minutes elapsed, bringing thrills at each end, before Higginbotham seized the ball in midfield and burst through. Tackled by Milne, he turned the ball forward, and HOAR pushed it past Robson and swerved past him to finish up with a hard, low drive that Crumley touched but could not hold, and so Luton were in a winning position at the interval.

The game restarted at a brisk pace, and after Bassett had banged in a shot that was stopped dead on the line by a defender, there was another of Hoar's quick rushes following unselfish work by Higginbotham, and the ball came right across goal to Butcher. Unable to control it for a shot, he tapped it to Bassett, and as Milne rushed in, the latter returned it and BUTCHER shot over Crumley's head into the net. There was a gradual weakening of effort by the Town after this, although periodical bursts put the Swansea goal in jeopardy, but for the most part we were entertained by the pretty short passing of the visiting forwards and the dour character of the tackling by the Town halves and backs, and the duel was maintained in midfield for a considerable time. The end was approaching before the visitors showed their most purposeful work. They banged the ball about more, and imitated the quick individual dashes of the home forwards, and so Bailey began to earn a few cheers, and he appeared to relish the job. His charge had one or two narrow escapes, but the end came with the Town goal intact.

The "Lilywhites" merited the win, and Sid Hoar was a happy man. All the team played unselfishly, diligently, and earnestly. It was every man for his mate and each for the whole. Bailey had an easy time until the game was more than seventy minutes old, and then he showed that he could keep goal. Lennon maintained his brilliant form, and if he is passed over by the Scottish Selection Committee for the International trials, then they have a lot of good men in the North Country. Tirrell was up against the Welsh International, Hole, and was often beaten for speed, but he used his wits well, and by playing wall up to Roe, he continued to do a lot of fine spoiling work, and his kicking was clean and true. Walker's illness left its effect on his play, but he was as gritty as ever, and gave Beynon little rope. Roe's skilful tackling and clever feeding were as good as ever, and, on the game as a whole, he was the best of the line. Molyneux took some little time to settle down, but in the second half he put up a magnificent exposition, and his relentless tackling and neat combination with Butcher and Bassett were as good as anything we could wish to see.

The necessary re-shuffling of the forward line evoked much curiosity and comment, but it had not been in operation many minutes before it had kindled enthusiasm on the other side of the rails. The changes did not im-

prove combination, but they were successful because the players did the unexpected. None of the visitors expected Sid Hoar to bang in the ball like a cannon shot in that first few minutes, and they breathed freely when the ball came back from the post. There is virtue in novelty when it takes the enemy by surprise. Frankly, however—and I am not "Simms mad," as I heard someone say the other day—I like the working of the line under Simms' leadership much better than that of Saturday. Higginbotham was fearless and full of resolution as ever, but he is better one pace to the left of centre. Hoar was in characteristic mood, but he had not enough room to operate, and he is better on the touch-line. Bassett and Butcher were the best-balanced and most effective pair, and their display sealed their positions to them for a long time to come. Both were as happy as sandboys, and revelled in each other's craftiness.

Swansea were well served by Crumley, and I do not agree that he should have saved any one of the goals. He certainly saved many that might have scored, and himself remained blameless. Robson and Milne were of average soundness, and I like the latter's style particularly. The middle men were hard workers, and Williams and Collins were successful, but McCallum found the home right too elusive. Brown was the brains of the attack. His dribbling was a feature of the game, and he usually did the opening out and most of the shooting. Jones was clever up to a point, and the wingers fast and tricky, while Beynon did well in the late stages. They played a clean, manly game on the whole, and I think the offences were about evenly divided, and were very few and usually trivial. One was a bit sorry that Brown should so far forget himself as to fall foul of the referee, for he is a really fine player, a good fellow at heart, and plays a manly, sporting game. He was certainly in the wrong in this instance.

Mr. Pearson was exceptionally good, and in marked contrast to the Southern referees we have had. He brooked no affront to himself, and was keen on the men playing the game in its true spirit. So seldom do we get referees of his stamp that it was a real pleasure to follow his control, and although he made one or two errors, as do the best of officials, he was always well up with the play.

LUTON TOWN 3
SWANSEA 0

LUTON TOWN:—Bailey; Lennon, Tirrell; Molyneux, Walker, Roe; Bassett, Butcher, Hoar, Higginbotham, Bookman.
SWANSEA TOWN:—Crumley; Robson, Milne; Williams, Collins, McCallum; Hole, Jones, Beynon, Brown, Spottiswoode.
Referee:—Mr. J. F. Pearson, Crewe.