

GREAT CHANCE FOR BETTER

WHEN we went to Brighton a black cat found Harry Higginbotham and made a fuss of him. At Paddington Station last Saturday a coal-black kitten followed him along a sub-way and up some steps, and if he had accepted a porter's invitation to take it along there is no knowing what would have happened. As it was, Luton got a point and Higginbotham scored the first goal registered by an opponent at Swindon. I hold the view that the best omens are plenty of confidence and a capacity for hard work, and thus that Grimalkin had nothing whatever to do with Luton's fine performance at Swindon. The reports that have appeared have not done half justice to the Luton players, who, so far as the play generally was concerned, overwhelmed the "Railwaymen."

There were 7655 spectators who paid for admission, and about thirty of these were young airmen and other soldiers from Salisbury Plain who had evidently come to help Luton as far as lay within the capacity of their lungs. It is no exaggeration to say that, taking the game throughout, they made more noise than the 7,625. I have never known such a quiet and dazed sort of crowd. After the glowing accounts of Swindon's brilliant play and terrible luck at Luton, they had come fully prepared to see Luton

BITE THE DUST.

And they could only look on in sheer amazement as the Luton forwards toyed with the Swindon halves and backs, and sigh with relief as the goal escaped. Before the end a few of the crowd were exhorting the Swindon men to earn their money. They had, as far as in them lay, but they were harassed and fagged out, and could not keep pace with the swift-footed Luton men, especially in the closing stages. And the number of people who admired Luton's stamina and spirited ending meant a volume of testimony to the work of Billy Lawson. Every man of the Luton side looked as fit as a fiddle at the final tootle, whereas the home players, to use a Swindonian complaint, "had their tongues out."

Such inaccurate and one-sided reports of a game as those emanating from Swindon I have not seen for many a long day, and there is plenty of excuse for the contempt felt by some of the players for the scurvy treatment they have had. Swindon were given full credit for their fine game at Luton in the first half the previous week, and when I say that at Swindon our lads were better all through the game than Swindon were in the first half at Luton, some idea of the amount of their pressure is obtained. The "Railwaymen" knew that they were beaten to a frazzle for the greater part of the game, and spectators to whom I spoke were frankly amazed at the game put up by Luton.

To write of HIGGINBOTHAM'S goal as a "gift offside" goal is

A SCANDALOUS INJUSTICE

to the best referee we have had this season. The ball was centred by Hoar, and Reid shot hard against an opponent. Higginbotham was not offside even if the opponent had not played the ball, for he burst past a couple of men and shot hard. The ball hit the post as Nash dashed across, and as it came back Higginbotham coolly gathered and tapped it into the net. It is true that the Swindon players appealed and one or two hesitated, but Mr. Crump showed not the slightest hesitation, and the "Railwaymen's" protest was less than half-hearted.

Swindon's goal was just as smart a bit of opportunism in its way, for NORTON took advantage of a moment when he was quite unmarked, to slip in and convert a centre from Turner. He was not in the position one expects to find an extreme winger, but that does not detract from the merit of his goal.

Our goal had just about three other narrow escapes, but if half the chances that fell to Luton had been taken we should have run near double figures. The team played a game as nearly approaching that hectic afternoon at South Shields as I can recollect. There was no faltering of defence, the middle men dominated the game, and the forwards made rings round the Swindon halves and backs, especially in the second half. Now we had a bit of dainty carpet work, short passing that made the ball appear like a running knot; then the tactics would change, and the ball would travel from right to left and back again at a great pace, and the Swindon defenders were utterly worn out long before the end. The one drawback was the lack of a finishing touch—the ability to put the seal on a magnificent exhibition. Every forward missed chances, but Higginbotham and Reid each had

WRETCHED LUCK.

Nash's save from the former a minute from the end was a brilliant feat, but he was lucky to be just in the right position at the right moment. Still, that is a goalkeeper's business.

There were periods in the second half when for five minutes at a stretch the ball was in the Swindon half, and for the last ten minutes of the game Swindon's forwards were helping in defence, and playing desperately for a point. Nash had a great deal more to do than at Luton, and he was quite safe, but Colebourne and Weston had a most exhausting afternoon. The halves could not compass the attacks of the Luton forwards, and Wareing and Rogers were almost helpless to circumvent the moves of the Luton flanks. Archer was the best of the three. The forwards could not get any help

from the men behind, and for the greater part of the game were impotent. Norton was the pick of the bunch, although the youngster Turner, did well betimes.

Gibbon had much less work to do than Nash and only twice was he fully extended. He was cool and confident. The backs were great throughout. Well up the field as a rule, they were playing a sort of reserve halves game, and were kicking strongly and cleanly all through. Both did well. The middle men were brilliant. They made the team. Not one could be said to be better than another. Foster's tremendous strength and courage, Walker's astute forestalling and thinking out the mind and the moves of the opposition, and Roe's clever headwork and footwork, all deserved the highest praise. It was a bit hard on Turner that he should be asked in his first game to run up against a man like Foster, and half-a-dozen centres would be about his limit. The half-back was

ALWAYS IN THE FIGHT

if there was the slightest chance of his getting the ball, and in the second half he made several dribbles, and had more shots at goal than any Swindon forward had during the game. Walker had Cooke chained up, and with Foster he put the stopper on Johnson, who could never get going. The Luton centre-half fed better, too, and if he had shot at goal on two or three occasions when he had worked a position instead of giving the chance to somebody else he might have had the satisfaction of winning the game. Roe again stood as custodian of the wing opponent, and it was well he did, for Norton was very good. The Luton half's good passes to Clarkson and Butcher were ideal, and helped to make that wing more effective than in any previous game.

However disappointing our forwards at Luton they certainly gave their best show of the season in this game. They were fast, tricky and enterprising, and some of their combination was of the highest class—the drawing of a man and then a transfer to a better-placed opponent. Butcher's return to the forward line made a powerful difference to the efficiency of the side. George is no marksman to write home about, but as a schemer and craftsman he is unrivalled among our inside men on his day. By keeping the ball on the ground and keeping it under control he was able to send Clarkson away with a clear field time after time. Colebourne and Rogers were in desperation before the end, and once, near the finish, after Clarkson had been fed cleverly and enabled to centre, Colebourne, as soon as Butcher got the ball, pelted off to Clarkson, and Butcher cut through on his own, what time the crowd rooked at the Swindon back's discomfiture. It was through Butcher's work that Clarkson showed his first really good game, and if he could maintain that form, the outside left position would be solved. He showed better speed and neater control, and he dribbled and centred splendidly. They made

A GRAND WING.

Hoar touched his particular best, and with Higginbotham pushing the ball outside or inside according to the disposition of the opposition, Hoar got plenty of chances, and he made good use of them. Before half-time he had Wareing panting, and afterwards the old Everton half-back did not know what to do for the right thing. When Wareing expected a pass Hoar just dribbled on, and when he tackled Hoar the pass had him beaten. Higginbotham was as unselfish as ever. He was streets better than in the previous game, and planned and executed for his colleagues with his old-time shrewdness. The only fault, and it is an old one, is that he will not always shoot when he should. Did he but take the ball on the run and hit it as we know he can there is no doubt that he would get thrice as many goals as he does.

Reid also deserves a good word. His work was greatly improved, and he had hard lines in not scoring on four or five occasions. He worked nicely with his inside men, but did not send out the ball to the wingers as often as necessary. He is less tempestuous than last season, but he is gaining experience and in due course he will make a fine inside forward. I still think that he should be persevered with as an inside winger, for he will not grow into the big man that is preferred as a leader. The boy is making good, anyway, and he learns something in every game.

On the whole it was a good, clean game, but towards the end the "Railwaymen" were wont to get rattled, especially Wareing and Rogers, and the backs, by doing things they ought not to do, had perforce to leave undone things they should have done. They admitted that the Town were the best side they had met this season, and especially had a good word for the defence.

SWINDON.—Nash; Colebourne, Weston; Rogers, Archer, Wareing; Norton, Davies, Cooke, Johnson, Turner.

LUTON.—Gibbon; Lennon, Tirrell; Foster, Walker, Roe; Hoar, Higginbotham, Reid, Butcher, Clarkson.

Referee.—Mr. R. R. Crump, London.

SWINDON SORRY.

The "North Wilts Herald" says: "Luton's goal was offside, or rather Higginbotham was offside when he took the first shot which hit the post. I am convinced on that point, but that does not excuse the players standing agape waiting for the whistle which never came, the while Higginbotham took his second shot and scored."

If Higginbotham were offside when he took his first shot he must have been equally so when he took the second, especially as the opposition were standing agape. The plain fact of the matter was that Higginbotham could not have been offside by any stretch of imagination, for he was behind Reid when the latter shot and the ball came direct to Higginbotham from the body of Colebourne.

The same writer says: "Nash, to my mind, saved Swindon from defeat. He rose to the occasion when all his colleagues were lost. He would have saved that goal had it been possible, but it was hopeless to try. As it was, he saved wonderfully on at least three occasions, and Swindon can thank their lucky stars they had so good a custodian between the posts."

The "Swindon Advertiser" says: "It was a disgruntled crowd that left the County Ground on Saturday. Supporters went there confidently expecting to see the Town win; they came away with the impression that Luton got something less than their deserts in a division of the points and an equal share of the bonus money."

And in reference to the goal: "Even had the Luton man been offside, which he was not, there was no earthly reason for the defence to have stopped dead."

If anyone wrote to Mr. R. R. Crump, the referee, and asked his opinion I am quite sure he would confirm what I have said above. Moreover, there was practically no appeal from any player. The "dead stop" was due to the fact that they thought all was over from Higginbotham's first shot, and when it hit the post he was ready again and they were not.

CREAT GAME AT LUTON