

LUTON TOWN'S FAILURE.

BEFORE the game at Aberdare last Saturday I went into the home team's dressing room, and in conversation with one of the players expressed the hope that we should have a cleaner and brighter game than was the case at Luton. He fervently hoped so. The player in question was Sheldon, the half-back, and he certainly tried to do so. In fact, with two exceptions, play on that side of the field was as clean as could be desired. The exceptions were Rogers and Hindmarsh, at a time when Luton were having the better of the exchanges in the second half. Not so the other side, and in view of the recent trouble with Tottenham Hotspur and Arsenal, it is interesting to note that Archibald was with the 'Spurs last season. A week before the Luton crowd were indignant because this player was hurt, and some of them actually clamoured for a Town player's dismissal. Had they been at Aberdare on Saturday they would have been clamouring for that extreme punishment to be meted out to Archibald, for in the early stages he began dirty tricks on Hoar, and some of the best sporting crowd in Wales criticised him almost in the same way that the Luton crowd had criticised our player the week before.

There was no justification for it, for our team were playing clean football, and were not disposed to "play the man at all," and the majority of the home players were also content to do the same. In one period in the second half Luton were playing as if they had only been on the field five minutes and were carrying all before them, and at this time there was persistent tripping and hacking by three of the home players, two already mentioned and Gillespie. They spoiled keen and interesting play at this period, but it served to help defeat the Town. Still, that was not the reason the Town lost, nor was it due to any fault of the referee, for although Mr. Wildig made some extraordinary errors, he was impartial in it, and

BOTH SIDES SUFFERED.

But he should have taken stronger measures than he did with the players mentioned.

There were many worse things done in this game than happened at Luton, and at one time if Sid Hoar got the ball it was almost a certainty that he would get some sort of a rap. When, eventually, and after a good deal of protest, he went after Archibald and fouled the latter, the referee had a word with both players. He had previously spoken to Archibald, but what he said did not count for much. There was plenty of whistle but not enough decision.

But the defeat was due to the unfitness of the Town in the first half. That Billy Lawson was not to blame was proved by the fact that when the players had worn off the stiffness they almost monopolised the game. But it was then too late to win, and by finding touch and offside tactics the "Darians" succeeded in registering their first win since August 26th, and scoring their first goal since September 11th.

Aberdare have only a small number of players, but their best team of this season turned out on Saturday. In every department they were better than at Luton, and although they were fortunate in their success, it could hardly be grudged them, so earnestly did they play, and so heavy have been the odds against them in recent games. As at Luton, their forwards often played stylish football, and they were always threatening goals when they got anywhere within reasonable range of Gibbon, who had saved several times before his goal fell.

Before that occurred, however, the Town had lost chances, and Sid Hoar, who has notched four goals from the penalty spot, made a hash of his fifth chance, for he failed to put the ball out of the reach of the lengthy Leahy, who managed to divert it and then to get it away before Hoar could reach it. The penalty was awarded for a particularly bad foul by Brooke on Hoar after the latter had made

A BRILLIANT RUN

from near the centre, and was within a few yards of goal and appeared certain to score. There was no questioning the referee's decision, and the only fear among the spectators near the Press box was that the Aberdare back might receive marching orders.

Within a hundred seconds Aberdare had scored, but it was more than that time before the goal was allowed. Rogers put in a glorious shot that hit the bar, the ball fell straight down and then bounced high over the bar outwards. Gibbon caught it and cleared, and although the home players and crowd yelled for a goal the referee motioned for play to proceed, and the ball went out to the right. Unfortunately for Luton, it went out of play, and before it could be thrown in the home players had resumed their appeals so forcibly that the referee consulted both linesmen and then awarded a goal. It was no more than was deserved, certainly, but the circumstances were very bad. The reports that the ball was in the net are wholly untrue, for Gibbon could never have got the ball away as he did had the ball been anywhere near the net. As the Town goalkeeper admitted

quite frankly afterwards, the ball dropped just over the line, and then, by one of those curious circumstances that happen occasionally, it bounced outwards.

We had chances afterwards, but there was lack of ginger and decision near goal, and the interval came with the Town a goal down.

They were hard pressed in the early stages of the second half, but had chances of equalising, and not a little hard luck and rough experience before Aberdare's second goal came as a gorgeous fluke. Tompkinson shot hard, but was right off the mark. The ball, however, struck Martin's foot with great force and was diverted into the net, Gibbon being hopelessly beaten.

Thereafter the Town played like a new team. Corner after corner was forced and well placed, and many attacks were engineered. Tirrell joined his forwards and put in shots, and Foster was more than once

IN THE THICK

of the fight in the neighbourhood of the home goal. But Aberdare were bent on holding the points by some means, and with the Town forwards off colour as regards shooting, success did not come until very near the end. Then Reid, who was doing better than at any period of the game, got the advantage of Brooke and lifted the ball right across goal. Leahy managed to touch the ball with the tips of his fingers, but could not stop it, and it found the net all right.

In the short time remaining Leahy had to save two or three times, and Butcher almost equalised, but the end came with the points to the home team.

The long journey into Wales on the same day was the main cause of defeat. For nearly an hour the Town played ragged or listless football, and they could not find any punch when near goal. They had travelled to London on Friday night, but wished they had stayed at home and done the whole journey on Saturday morning. Not only the players, but Messrs. Mouse and Smart, who accompanied them, were at one on the same point, and were by no means confident on the outward journey. Moreover, the change in the forward line was not a happy one. We missed the weight of Higginbotham, and what we gained by the left wing as the result of Butcher's return was lost by the comparative ineffectiveness of Hoar, who had to do his own "fetching and carrying." Reid scored, and the Welshman, of whom a goodly number came over the mountain from his home at Troedyrhiw, gave him many a cheer, as, indeed, they did many of the Town players. But I stand by what I have already said about the boy. He needs coaching before he can make a class inside winger. Clarkson was the outstanding forward, and some of his runs were thrilling, but he was spoon-fed by Butcher. Thompson was feeling the effects of a long journey from Durham on Friday, and our hope is that the news from his home circle will be such this week that he will enter upon his task against Plymouth with a lighter heart, and, consequently, more spirit and fitness.

The halves suffered also. They improved as the game wore on, and before the end were playing grandly. Walker did magnificently when it was most needed, and his colleagues gave of their best when the team were trying to snatch the game out of the fire. Lennon and Tirrell played well in defence, and Gibbon was as good as ever in goal.

For Aberdare, Leahy, Brooke and Gillespie were in splendid form, and all the forwards did well.