

LUTON TOWN EXCEL

SPLENDID VICTORY AT NEWPORT.

Spectators Create a Scene.

THERE is a big difference between Plymouth Arkyle and Newport County—not merely of inches and pounds avoirdupois, but also of skill. Few thought, however, after the heavy defeat Luton Town sustained at Plymouth that they would be able to visit Newport and bring back a couple of points, and do it by such a decisive margin as three goals clear. The fact that Newport were not very far up on the League table was, of course, a hopeful sign, but then Aberdare were even lower, and they had deprived us of a brace of points. And there was no lack of confidence that the "Ironsides," as they are called, would rise to the occasion. Well, they played as hard and as well as they knew how, but they were hopelessly beaten, and if the Town had continued to exert themselves to the fullest extent, they would have inflicted an absolutely crushing defeat. They were quite three goals better and, setting aside the goals scored, they actually had quite as many chances of scoring as Newport, and were infinitely more dangerous when on the move. It was not a game of unusual skill, but one in which both teams commenced in fast and determined style, neither asking nor giving quarter. Unfortunately for Newport, the Town players had

THE ADVANTAGE

in this respect, and in spite of the unsportsmanlike attitude of a portion of the crowd, they played fairly, and the referee would not intervene as much as the crowd wished. Good "Ironsides" got the worst in these tactics they began to adopt other tactics, as Walker, Higginbotham and Thompson found to their cost, and before the interval play had lost much of its interest and players had become embittered. To the credit of the Town players, however, they maintained their balance, with the result that for quite long periods Lennon and Tirrell were playing in the vicinity of the middle line, and when they were called upon they dropped the ball back into the Newport penalty area, where the struggle was chiefly waged.

The Town played well to a man, and while on a comparison of the strength of Brighton—the other team we have defeated away from home—and Newport, I cannot say that this was the better performance, it certainly was a smart achievement, and it was the heaviest defeat the "Ironsides" have sustained this season. In view of their

LOWLY POSITION

in the table, it is as well to point out that while they have only scored in four games out of 13, and their "goals for" number only seven, they have not gone under by a heavier count than 2-0, and in the five last matches have only lost two goals. It must not, therefore, be conceived that all the Town had to do was to go, to see, and to conquer. What happened was that while Newport felt on safe ground because of Luton's loss at Plymouth, the Town players felt the urgent necessity of wiping out that defeat at the expense of Newport. They did it.

In the twelve minutes' play that preceded the first goal, the Town had plainly shown that they were the better side, and they convinced Newport to that effect. The penalty kick was unquestioned, for the referee was on the spot when White fisted out a header from Foster, who would otherwise have scored. HIGGINBOTHAM was called for the kick, and he simply bashed the ball past Carr. After a Newport bid for equality had been frustrated the Town made a hot attack, and Thompson got the defence in a tangle before slipping the ball forward for BUTCHER to take in his stride and fire into the net from fifteen yards' range—as great a goal as one could wish to see.

Others should have come before the cross-over, and Newport would have been accounted unlucky also against a less resolute defence, but they made several

DESPERATE RAIDS

and came very close. Nevertheless there was not the sustained virility about their work marked that of the Town.

The "kill" came within a minute of the start, for the Town started as they had let off, and the cunning of Butcher, who took throw-in from the right flank and made an opening for Clarkson, was responsible for the goal. Clarkson's shot was deflected, but HIGGINBOTHAM came up on the run and scored with a shot that left Carr helpless.

The Town continued to have the better of the game for a long time, and it was only when victory was assured for the Town that Newport had a look in. They took advantage of the looseness that always characterises the Town's play in such circumstances, and they gave Gibbon quite a hot time. Twice the custodian made thrilling saves by diving at full length and fishing the ball from the toe of an opponent, and he made half a dozen fine saves before the final whistle. Once Tirrell headed out from under the bar, and Jennings also got the ball away when a goal appeared certain while Walker pulled up Paterson when he was clean through and only Gibbon to beat. It was following one of these saves that Lowes tried to rush the Town goalkeeper, and measured his length on the ground in consequence, that led to spectators

THROWING STONES.

and one missile hit Gibbon on the leg. When the referee addressed the crowd behind the Luton goal, a spectator jumped the rails, came behind the official and struck him in the back. The Newport officials hastened to the scene, and police also came up, but the former, instead of holding the spectator and giving him in charge, helped him over the rails again. This was probably done to save trouble, but it was a mistaken policy. Policemen were stationed among the crowd, and the game proceeded without further interruption, although a linesman and the Town players were subjected to a lot of insulting language, and even in the dressing room and in the street en route for the station the Town players were not free from abuse. It was a very unsportsmanlike exhibition. After the game I interviewed the three officials, and they were unanimous in their statements that the Town players had not deserved any such treatment, and agreed with my opinion that the

ROOT OF THE TROUBLE

was in the disparity of physique, in which the Newport team were certainly at a disadvantage.

The Town players finished fresh and fit, apart from injury, as usual. The defence was not irresolute for one moment. Gibbon had little to do until the closing stages, and then showed up in a light that has never come upon him before. His judgment in two of the saves was superb, and on this form he could never be superseded. Lennon and Tirrell were safe as the Bank of England, and neither faltered nor flinched. Lennon got a very heavy fall that shook him up badly just before half-time, but he showed no trace of it after the interval. His length kicking was clean and useful from a forward's point of view. Tirrell's mighty clearances evoked many a sigh from the crowd, and his almost uncanny judgment in estimating the drop of the ball and the grooves of the opposition, were very fine. The halves were unpassable at times, and while the nursing of the forwards left much to be desired, as spoilers they could not be surpassed. Walker had a field day in the middle, and Paterson suffered almost total eclipse. The Scot's speed has increased considerably, and on several occasions he overhauled forwards when

PURSUIT SEEMED HOPELESS.

Foster was his giant self, and reduced the opposing wing almost to despair by his strong rushes and imperturbable manner, and he lent a hand at the many corner kicks that came our way. Jennings played his finest game since coming to the club, and he now appears to be in the form that was always a bar to Luton progress when he was in opposition. His anticipation, recovery, and his resolute resistance were wonderful, and he also showed how to get the ball down to the ground and to keep it there until he tapped it to the feet of his wing. He had much to do with the success of Butcher and Clarkson. The middle line, as a line, was excellent.

The forwards were handicapped by the early injury to Thompson, which of necessity made for individual effort. It was a pity that the vanguard did not get the chance to work as a complete machine, for much more damage must have accrued to Newport's goal average. The return of Butcher sharpened up Clarkson, and the left wing made

RINGS ROUND

the opposition. Butcher fed Clarkson almost to perfection, and the only fault that could be found was the latter's holding on too long occasionally. He was altogether too fast and tricky for Nairn and Dimmock, and Butcher mystified all the defenders by his repertoire of feints and puzzles. His goal was a gem, and if he would shoot in every game as on Saturday, he could not be excluded from the side. Hoar and Higginbotham did not have as much of the ball as the opposite flank, but enough to give a lot of trouble. The former, now heading the goal scorers for the Town, added to intelligence a nice control, and his forceful rushes often threw the defenders off their balance. Had he remained in the front line it is conceivable that he would have doubled his brace of goals. Hoar's speed was little better than that of White, who played on him closely, as did Edwards, but the Town winger won more corners than any player, and his centres would have been more productive had Thompson been unhurt. The whole of the team deserve a special word for keeping their heads under exceptionally trying circumstances.

Of the home side Carr kept goal well, and White, a recent capture, was a smart back. Edwards was the outstanding half, although his two colleagues were hard workers, and McDonald was the most dangerous forward. The crowd did not number 5,000 but made more than 50,000.