

THE BIG SURPRISE!

Luton Overcome Portsmouth by Strong Play.

(By CRUSADER).

At Portsmouth.
LUTON TOWN 2 Goals
PORTSMOUTH 1 ..

PORTSMOUTH.—Newton: Cooper, Abbott; Davies, Wilson, Martin; Meikle, Mackie, Strange, Brown, Beedie.

LUTON TOWN.—Bird; Stephenson, Tirrell; Molyneux, Walker, Jennings; Reader, Butcher, Thompson, Irvine, Hoar.

Referee: Mr. W. E. Greenland, London.

If anything were calculated to bring me into the ranks of the superstitious, I fancy it would be the uncanny connection that appears to exist between Luton Town and a gentleman who fills the office of attendant on the Pullman by which we travelled. If he gets found out at Portsmouth he may find himself the unhappy object of a vendetta. Although he has been engaged on this work for several years and has accompanied many teams down to Portsmouth, he says that never yet has a team suffered defeat at Portsmouth after travelling on his car. He told us that on each occasion last year when we went to Portsmouth and drew, first in the League and then in the Cup. On Saturday we were reminded of it when he greeted us on entering his car. I am afraid, however, that few of us thought that his record would be maintained. But we did better, for the Town

WON HANDSOMELY

by the odd goal in three. They deserved to do so without any question, for they were quite the equal of Pompey's attack, and had a much more compact and stubborn defence.

If the team played well at Bristol the first half, they did even better at Portsmouth, for they showed far more virility and skill in attack, and this was evinced by the shooting proclivities of all the forwards. The extent of this unusual feature may be judged from the fact that it was freely admitted by Pompey supporters that their goal had never undergone such escapes and no forward line had more hard luck with good shots than was the case with Luton's forwards on Saturday. On three occasions in the first half, the Town forwards pelted shots at goal with such

RAPIDITY AND ACCURACY

that it was, as a Portsmouth paper in front of me says, "almost a miracle how Luton failed to regain the lead." Newton made at least four saves when he appeared to be beaten to the world; Thompson was only inches too high on as many occasions with terrific shots; all the forwards hammered at goal during one red-hot struggle in the Portsmouth goal area; Butcher was twice tripped when he was dodging for an opening close in, and a defender also handled during a fierce assault, the referee being frightened apparently. So heavy was the pressure on the Portsmouth goal on these



J. Walker

occasions in the first half that if the Town had led by four or five goals at half-time, they would not have had more than their deserts. In sharp contrast to this was the fact that Bird had only to stop one shot other than the scoring effort. Luton's goal was

A BEAUTY,

and it was especially encouraging to Walker.

Play had been in progress 32 minutes, and the Town had made a terrific attack when the ball came out to WALKER, and from just over twenty yards' range he placed the ball in the net with as fine an effort as one could wish to see. The equaliser came ten minutes later, for after Walker had held up Strange, the ball rebounded from the latter to MACKIE, who was allowed to go on in spite of cries of offside, and he beat Bird comfortably with a fast, low shot at close quarters. Credit for the winning goal midway through the second half belongs chiefly to Molyneux and Reader. Martin was robbed by Molyneux, whose neat ground pass sent Reader away with a clear course. Abbott was beaten in the tackle, and Reader drove the ball across in front of goal, when THOMPSON, coming up to meet it at the right moment, rapped it past Newton. The gentleman sitting next to me told me then that Luton had won, and so it proved in spite of the fierce rushes in which Pompey's halves played as prominent a part as the forwards.

BIRD WAS TESTED

a good deal oftener in this half, but even then he had less work to do than Newton, and so grandly did the Town backs and halves defend that their goal was seldom in real jeopardy, whereas a couple of inches or a straight drive instead of a swerving shot by Hoar, would have given another goal. It was probably because the Town braced themselves to keep their lead that Pompey had more of the attack in this half, for both Irvine and Butcher fell back to assist when there was any danger. It was a splendid win, and it brings up

the question as to whether the Town are not playing

BETTER AWAY THAN AT HOME.

On recent performances I should say they are, and there would soon be a big increase in the "gates" at Luton if they could maintain for a few weeks such form as that of Saturday. The most striking feature perhaps, was the confidence with which they started, and they finished as they began. Every man played finely, and though there was no lack of vigour, the play generally was wholesome, fast and by no means unskilful. The opinion was expressed that Portsmouth were a poor side, but I have never known them turn out a poor side; at least, they have not done so since the war. Youth is too pronounced, perhaps, but there was not a single player on their side lacking in skill, and I should say that the aim is the building up of a tip-top team. Their defence and the halves did splendid work all through, and some of the forward work reached

HIGH CLASS,

pretty combination being shown by the inside men at times, but the Town halves and backs were too quick and strong for them, and most of their shooting was from long range.

Bird was not properly at home when



S. Bird.

Meikle got the ball across in the early stages, and he dropped it, but that was the only blemish on his display. He did enough to justify his presence in the team. Stephenson and Tirrell made a grand pair of wingers. The captain has always had many admirers at Portsmouth, and on Saturday he excelled. His judgment, in taking position, his sureness in anticipating the moves of the home forwards, and his sound vollying were superb. Stephenson was at home straightway, and against a clever and spongy wing he never made a mistake. He got into it with cheery spirit when necessary, and he kicked and tackled with rare rest and certainty, and if his work was

NOT SO POLISHED

as that of Lennon, it was every bit as useful. As a pair they fitted well, and covered each other nicely.

The halves were at their best. Molyneux seems to have found his very test game once more, and in spite of a nasty shaking up, he never flinched or tired, and his opponents found him a most awkward obstacle, whilst his co-operation with Butcher and Reader was something to write home about, especially in the first half. Jennings gets better with every game, and his unorthodox methods, his liking for a tussle, in which strength is a factor, and his capacity for making the men in front of him work, was never better exemplified than in this case. Walker faced a clever trio, whose footwork was above the average, but he watched Strange so closely, and was so swift and clever in his tackling and power of recovery, that seldom did the ball elude him. In the first half, too, he fed his forwards very much better than usual.

The forward line was bright, fast and skilful. There was a tendency to play

THE CLOSE GAME

early in the first half, but when Thompson opened out the game, the home defenders were given much fruitless leather-chasing. He was also very tricky, and he shot with great power, but not often enough. He deserved more than one goal. Butcher and Irvine vied with each other as to which could do the more work. They were gluttons for it, and both kept the ball on the carpet well and tricked and passed very accurately. Irvine has yet to prove valuable as a marksman, but I do not think he will be long without goals, and he had very hard luck, as did also Butcher. Each paid attention to his winger, and Reader gave his best work of the season against two of the grandest defenders in the League—Martin and Abbott. He outpaced them and centred well, and did not waste any chances. Hoar was the first to threaten danger, and he continued to give the opposition many trying moments. He was faster than Cooper, and had he got more work in the second half, would probably have gone nearer scoring than he did—which means that he would have scored.

Newton and his backs were seldom at fault: Martin was a great half-back, and of the forwards, Beedie was the better winger, and the others played good football.

THE LEAGUE: DIVISION III.

	P	W	L	D	F	A	P
Bristol City	19	13	3	4	30	18	28
Plymouth Argyle	18	12	4	2	29	9	24
Watford	19	12	4	4	30	21	26
Swansea Town	19	9	5	5	36	20	23
Milwall Athletic	18	6	2	10	15	8	22
Northampton Town	17	7	4	6	25	15	20
LUTON TOWN	19	8	7	4	30	25	20
Portsmouth	18	8	7	3	19	15	19
Norwich City	17	7	5	5	22	19	19
Queen's Pk Rangers	19	6	7	6	22	19	18
Brighton & Hove A	18	6	7	5	18	17	17
Merthyr Town	17	6	6	5	17	21	17
Bristol Rovers	18	5	7	6	13	17	16
Reading	18	4	7	7	17	20	15
Brentford	18	6	9	3	21	27	15
Charlton Athletic	18	4	7	7	12	22	15
Exeter City	17	6	9	2	11	34	14
Southend United	17	5	9	3	24	27	13
Newport County	18	4	9	5	12	22	13
Gillingham	17	4	11	2	16	28	10
Aberdare Athletic	17	3	12	2	12	33	8