

SWANSEA SMASHED.

LUTON TOWN FORWARDS ON FORM.

Reid's Hat Trick.

When I appealed last week for loyal support for the Town during the remaining part of the season, I had no idea that the players would endorse it in the way they did at the expense of Swansea. One had only to glance at the record of the Welsh club to realise that they were a tough proposition, and their splendid progress after a poor start indicated that they would make a bold bid for the spoils on Saturday. The score does not confirm these thoughts, but everyone present at the match will agree that Swansea did make a determined effort to annex the points, and that their position in the League could be perfectly understood by reason of the cleverness of their forwards. They were unfortunate in that they caught the Town in a most extraordinary mood, and one of the most helpful features of their game, the application of

THE OFFSIDE THEORY,

came unstuck at a critical period.

It made all the difference in the world to Swansea that their backs could not profit by experience. I am quite certain that the Town would have won even had this legitimate but unpopular practice not been in operation, but Swansea might not have been so thoroughly crushed.

Swansea's official view of the game was that the referee was in error, but I don't know anyone who would admit that the referee made a single mistake in regard to the scoring of any goal, although his decisions, if not quaint in themselves, were not given with promptitude. The whole secret of defeating the offside practice has been revealed time after time, and it is simplicity itself. If an attacking player will be intelligent enough to keep behind the ball he cannot be offside. For a long time the Town forwards did not seem able to grasp this simple idea, and once there was

A UNANIMOUS GUFFAW

from the spectators, and the Town players protested when Hoar was given offside when there were three opponents between him and the goal. Yet the referee was correct up to a point. What happened was this—and I deal with it here because a referee for whom I have great respect thought the decision was wrong—Hoar was in an offside position when the ball was passed to him, but he walked away so ostentatiously that the referee had no reason to whistle. Then two of the Swansea players dashed after the ball, and immediately they got past him, Hoar turned and gave chase. Then the referee whistled him offside. The only question in my mind was whether Hoar, seeing that he was a considerable distance away, could be regarded as interfering with the play. So far as his position was concerned he was offside, because the ball had not been played again. That summed up the case, and if the referee thought Hoar was interfering with the play, then his decision was beyond dispute, because he is

THE SOLE JUDGE

on points of fact. It is not enough to have three opponents between a player and the goal before he is offside: the vital point is his position when the ball was last played.

And in the same way the Swansea team fell into error, for they thought they had only to rush forward and leave the man to play the ball when he had not three men between himself and the goal, and the law would become operative. It is a ridiculous idea. The palm for pricking the bubble must be given to Higginbotham, because he was the first to realise the value of the pass when his colleagues were behind the ball; thus Swansea's defence was outwitted from that moment, and the Town attack became a potent factor once more.

It cannot be said that the combination of the Town front line was particularly bright, although it was much better than usual, but by sheer stamina, speed and dash they conquered, and not the least

REFRESHING FEATURE

of their game was the manner in which they shot at goal. It is just over a year since Luton got six goals in a game, Gillingham being trounced by 7-0, but there is a vast difference between the position of Swansea now and Gillingham then. A victory for the "Swans" would have brought them only two points behind the leaders.

In a few lines the game may be summarised thus:—

The ground was heavy, but the weather fine. Tirrell lost the use and the Town faced a stiff breeze.

Two minutes from the start Higginbotham and Hoar made good from Jennings' pass, and the first-named passed inside for REID to score with a fast low shot that Denoon dived to but failed to arrest.

Swansea pressed the more during the next twelve minutes, and then Reid made a great run, and his shot was blocked close in, the ball going for a corner. Clarkson placed the ball well, and after several shots had been repelled the ball was kicked against HIGGINBOTHAM'S legs, and it rebounded into the net.

Swansea attacked hotly, and THOMPSON scored with a ground shot a few minutes later.

REID made full use of a nice pass by Higginbotham, rushing past the backs to score a great goal.

Swansea pressed to the interval, and Denoon hit the post.

For twenty minutes after the resumption, Swansea pressed hard, and another shot struck the post. Their backs made good use of the "offside" rule.

Higginbotham then sent Hoar away, and the winger centred right across the goal-mouth for REID to rush in and score.

Reid made a fine run and passed to HOAR,

who dribbled into position and scored with a splendid shot.

CLARKSON ran nearly half the length of the field, and beat Denoon with a clever shot as the keeper came out.

As a side, the Town were stronger both in defence and attack, Swansea's combination comparing unfavourably with the Town's sudden raids. In defence, Gibbon made several smart saves, but he did not seem quite as confident as usual. Lennon and Tirrell were

A STOUT PAIR

of backs, and although they were often tested very severely, they came out of the ordeal with colours flying. The middle line played better than in any game this season. Jennings was superb at centre-half, and not only in breaking up, but in feeding his forwards, he did wonderful work. His passes to Higginbotham were a striking example of how this work should be done, and were the real initiation of several fine movements, while he shot splendidly on two or three occasions. Molyneux got through an enormous amount of work, and has never played better, and he always had a foot or head in the way if he had a reasonable chance of reaching the ball. Roe played in his customary skilful fashion, and his positioning for intercepting, his collection and control of a rapidly moving ball were magnificent. He was always with Hole when the little winger got the ball, and gave him little chance of centreing, while he gave his own wing any amount of work.

In the forward line Reid reached

A HIGHER STANDARD

than ever before. He is not yet an International, and he was under obligation to the players on each side of him, and to Jennings, for the superior physique of Harwood, the opposing centre-half, was negated by the ball being kept on the ground. The little Welshman was fast and thrustful, and his rushes between the backs were disconcerting, while he shot well. Higginbotham played finely, too, and he frequently sent Reid and Hoar away with nice passes, and he was always a troublesome customer. Butcher did not score, and he missed chances, but his quick, thoughtful work brought out the best in Clarkson, and he was always on the look-out for opportunities. Hoar did not do so well in the first half as in the second, when he was very fast and sagacious, and his centreing was accurate. Clarkson once more played well, and his speed and control were good. He would have given even more trouble had he made ground more often when he had the opportunity.

Swansea were best served in defence by Milne; Williams was a rare force at half, and had no superior for industry and skill combined, and in the forward line Smith and Deacon were a constant source of danger.

LUTON TOWN 6 goals

SWANSEA TOWN 1 goal

SWANSEA TOWN. — Denoon; Morley, Milne; Roulson, Harwood, Williams; Hole, Deacon, Smith, Thompson, Spottiswoods.

LUTON TOWN. — Gibbon; Lennon, Tirrell; Molyneux, Jennings, Roe; Hoar, Higginbotham, Reid, Butcher, Clarkson.

Referee: Mr. F. Todman, Croydon.