

LUTON'S SPLENDID SPIRIT.

Gibbon Injured.

(By CRUSADER).

BRISTOL ROVERS ... 1 goal

LUTON TOWN 1 goal

BRISTOL ROVERS—Whatley; Armitage, Haydon; Furness, Rutherford, Currie; Chance, Morgan, Howarth, Lunn, Lea.

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

Referee: Mr. T. G. Bryan, Wolverhampton.

At 5 p.m. on Saturday evening there were few who had journeyed from Luton who did not heave sighs of relief that it was all over. And in the same camp there was no little satisfaction, for they had struggled against heavy odds for 45 minutes. The Rovers' ground is just about the worst in the League, and the fears those of us who know the ground had of the match being postponed seemed likely to be borne out when we got to the Western city. We had not all alighted from the train when we were informed that there was no match, but we went on to Eastville, and the gates were still locked. The River Frome, which flows beside the ground and close behind the dressing room, was "in spate" as the Highland men would say, consequently it could not take the drainage from the ground. Trenches close to the rails had been dug and were full of water, there were pools three or four inches deep in one half of the playing pitch, and where the pitch was green and apparently firm, appearances were deceptive, for it was

ANKLE DEEP IN BOG;

where there was neither grass nor water there was a slushy sand. Play would have been impossible to half the officials of football, but, fortunately for the Town, the Rovers are behind with their engagements, and the referee was not afraid of getting his feet wet. The rain had ceased and everybody was hopefully saying that the ground would improve if the clouds did not break, as the hour before the kick-off ticked away. When the gates were opened about 2.45, and the referee said that the game would be played, the only grumble I heard was from the Rovers' players. The Luton party, and especially Mr. E. E. Gibbs, who was in charge

brightened up a little as the spectators began to dribble in, and when the game started we were all happy and bright — more or less.

Very soon the crowd were enjoying the fun as the players slithered and slopped about, but all things considered it was a fast and interesting



T. Gibbon.

game. The Rovers had not won a game at home since October 7th, and they had not scored a goal at home since Christmas Day, and they were reminded of it almost before they had started. Even then they got a shock, for the Town had the better of the opening passages, and they were the first to score. The Rovers' goal had several

NARROW ESCAPES,

one in particular when Reid broke through and challenged the goalkeeper, and Whatley was very lucky indeed to get the ball away from the goal-line before the Town player could get his foot to the ball. Butcher had shown nice appreciation of the conditions, and he was chiefly responsible when the goal did come. He picked up a pass about twenty yards out, and fainted to the left and slipped round to the right of Armitage and away from Haydon as the latter came across. He got within six yards of goal, and as Whatley dashed out he shot to the left of the keeper. A goal seemed certain, but the ball hit the post and came out a couple of yards. REID was following up hot-foot and tapped the ball through. The Rovers kicked up a clamour for offside, although Butcher was yards in front of any Luton player when he shot, and it was only by wisely following up that Reid got the goal. The referee hesitated not a moment, and so we had the lead.

The Rovers played desperately after this, but the Town defenders were equally determined, and foiled them time after time. Meanwhile the Town forwards made speedy raids, and it was only

BY IMPROPER MEANS

that Clarkson was held up on several occasions. The Town goal had some narrow escapes, too, and Gibbon made one clever save when he rapped over the bar a great shot from Morgan, who was always dangerous. When the equalising goal did come it had an element of luck in it. A Town forward passed back to his half-back when the latter, not expecting, missed the ball. It was promptly seized and slipped into the middle. Howarth was hampered by Jennings, but managed to get in a pass to MORGAN, whose fine drive was quite unstoppable.

After this the Town again had the better

of the exchanges, the forwards being very lively, and once Butcher shaved the post with a lovely shot after a characteristic dribble following a cunning move at a throw-in, and then Sid Hoar was only an inch or two too high with a terrific drive after a splendid rush by Higginbotham. Disaster befell the Town three or four minutes before the interval. In a desperate rally by the Rovers there was a crowd of players in the goal mouth. Gibbon was rushing out to get the ball when Howarth

CRASHED INTO HIM.

Fortunately for the Town goal, Jennings blocked the shot, and the ball flew wide as a heap of players landed in the mud. Gibbon had to be helped off the field, and a doctor was summoned. He had received a severe blow on the nape and was suffering from concussion, and so was quite unfit for further play. Sid Hoar went into goal, and remained there for the rest of the game.

The second half was remarkable for the fact that while the Rovers did a great deal of pressing, they failed against the stalwart defence opposed to them. For the greater part of thirty minutes it was a struggle in the Town half, but remarkably few shots came near Hoar, and, indeed, he only had about three shots to stop. Once he ran out and beat Chance in clever fashion. It was a fine shot from Morgan that did beat him, but Tirrell was on the goal line and punched over the top in quite Gibbonite fashion. So close was Tirrell to Hoar—indeed the latter touched the ball as well—that the referee appeared uncertain what had happened, but he gave a penalty. Rutherford took the kick, and the Town players adopted the latest tactics of standing on the line behind the ball and so limiting Rutherford's run. There were apparently, some

HARD WORDS

about it, and whether that upset Rutherford or not, I do not know, but he made a wretched attempt, the ball going yards wide. The next thrill we had was when Morgan and Howarth got away, and the former beat Hoar with a flying shot, but the referee had whistled the pair up before the goal came, either because the scorer deliberately pushed Lennon out of the way or because Howarth was offside, there being no doubt about either offence.

In the last quarter of an hour the Town had the better chances, for once Reid beat Haydon cleverly and had a clear course for goal when he was badly fouled by Haydon on the verge of the penalty area, and laid out. There was a fear that he had suffered serious injury, but he recovered, although limping badly. Tirrell nearly knocked Whatley over with the subsequent drive, and then Currie and Haydon each fouled Butcher, quite as badly as Reid had been brought down when the inside left had beaten the defence and had only Whatley to beat, while Reid, on another occasion, put in a hot shot that Whatley could not hold properly at the first attempt. In the closing stages the

ROVERS WERE HELPLESS

against the quick tackling of the Town halves and backs, and they could not get near the Town goal.

So the spoils were shared, although the honours were with the Town. The result was a tribute to the grim determination of our defenders, for to lose the goal-keeper before half-time, is about the severest handicap that a team can suffer. Before his departure Gibbon had kept goal finely, and afterwards Sid Hoar shaped with confidence, although his task was not exacting. Lennon was again in fine form, and played one of his best games, his kicking being steady and well-timed, and his tackling swift and certain. Tirrell was as good, his anticipation being very intelligent, and his kicking in all sorts of situations was admirable. The half-backs irritated the home crowd by the tenacity with which they clung to the man in possession. Jennings was again

A GREAT TRIAL

to Howarth and his inside colleagues, hussling, harassing and robbing them discriminately, for he usually picked on the likely man. Molyneux and Roe again played finely, and revelled in the mud. Both were opposed by fleet wingers, and they shadowed them closely throughout. The forwards were going well until Hoar's withdrawal. Butcher was the "live wire" again, and he did an enormous amount of work at top speed, passing and dribbling with cunning, and he deserved a goal if anybody did. Clarkson gave a much improved display, dribbling smartly and centring well; Hoar was a danger in the first half, and Higginbotham did splendid work both with and without a partner. Young Reid is coming on, and he was again in the right place when wanted. Against the lengthy Rutherford he made a good show, and but for trips he would probably have had the hat trick again.

For the Rovers Haydon, Rutherford, Furness, Chance, Morgan and Lea did best.

Not until we were near London on the return journey was Gibbon anything like himself again, and he felt the effects until to-day.