

HOW READING WON THE DOUBLE

LUTON TOWN THREE GOALS DOWN.

(By CRUSADER).

READING 3 Goals
LUTON TOWN Nil

READING.—Kane; Walker, Allan; Dand, Eggo, McGarry; Carr, Gardiner, Jennings, Poulton, Springell.

LUTON.—Gibbon; Lennon, Tirrell; Molyneux, Walker, Roe; Hoar, Butcher, Reid, Irvine, Clarkson.

Referee.—Mr. H. C. Curtis, Rayleigh.

Sentence was duly executed, and there was no fluke about it—and I daresay most of you have read that the score should have been double figures. One of the most amazing things to me is that so few writers give credit to visiting sides—win or lose. I begin to wonder sometimes if I do the correct thing in saying that the teams to beat Luton deserve to do so. One would imagine that of Saturday's game at Elm Park the Luton goalkeeper was as busy as a croupier in the rush hours at Monte Carlo. Well, apart from the team, there were five travelled from Luton, and one married lady whose paternal home is at Luton, sat in the grand stand, and I am sure the six will be unanimous in saying that Luton had a reasonable share of the game for a team operating away from home, and that the main difference lay in the fact that the home team knew better how to utilise their opportunities, and were more at home on the mud—if the pudding could be called mud.

So far as skill, by which I mean clever footwork, was concerned, Luton were superior. They were smarter with the ball, and man for man were able to hold it better than Reading, but

THE MAIN TROUBLE

was that the forwards held it too long, and in the matter of distribution neither forwards nor half-backs were accurate. On the other hand, Reading's deficiency in individual skill was more than compensated by the quick, hot-footed manner in which they went for goal. Whereas Luton's progress was more attractive and involved dizzy manoeuvring by three, four or five men, Reading's aggression came chiefly by means of a big kick forward, a clash to the wings, a bash back into the middle, and a shot at goal. Paying tactics, too, for a cumbersome side like Reading. We never deserved to be down at half-time, and I shall always think that the speed with which Reading took the free kick that brought the goal, surprised the Luton players. It was a disputed decision that gave them the opportunity, and Roe pointed to his shoulder, which was daubed by contact with the ball, as showing where the blow fell. The situation was just above three yards outside the penalty area, and as if afraid that the referee would reverse his decision, EGGO placed the ball and shot hard and high into the net. It seemed as if Luton must equalise on the stroke of half-time, but

THAT SILLY HABIT

of Reid's in bringing the ball into position with his hand was once more responsible for a disappointment. Reading's defenders might as well have been in the neighbourhood of the Spanish Main for what chance they had of stopping the little centre-forward, and he could well have received the ball on his chest and then made his fine shot into the net, had he only retained some degree of wisdom, for Kane had no earthly chance of stopping the ball that crashed into the net. There was a similar incident in the second half, and, as I have often said, if this bad fault were eliminated, he would be a far more useful player.

The first half ended with the impression that the teams were well matched, and there were always hopes of a win. In the second, however, the Town's right flank quite failed to hold Reading's left, and from this quarter the damage came. Springell had been reduced to as near impotence as seemed possible in the first half, and Molyneux had him strung up, so much so that

his colleagues left him almost severely alone, and the crowd cried out for him to get a chance. He got it at the right moment, for he was well fed in the second half, and he made

GOOD USE OF THE ROPE,

for both goals came from his work. He first ran round Lennon and shot hard, and with Gibbon beaten, Tirrell kicked away from the goal line, but the ball went to JENNINGS, who hit it first time and it went into the net. The third came when Springell worked an almost identical position and then lofted the ball in front for GARDINER to head through.

Luton had chances and tried their hardest, but their strategy was not well rounded off, and it was amazing, and not a little amusing to the home supporters, to see the veteran Walker, whom someone said was 46 years old, and whom the newspapers say is 43, getting the better of Town players who could beat him by yards in a straight sprint. And he did it by using his wits more than his feet. Kane was not troubled one tenth of what he should have been, and Walker was his best co-defender. The middle men were moderate, with Eggo again the best, although not so good as the previous week. All the forwards did well except Gardiner, and Sam Jennings had more chances than at Luton, but he

COULD NOT SHOOT

so accurately.

Gibbon was starred as something out of the ordinary as a goalkeeper, yet he was not tried as much as in an average away game. Lennon did well in the first half, but in the second Springell was more than he could manage, and the task was all the heavier by reason of Molyneux working more in the middle than in the first half. Tirrell did fine work all through. His kicking was strong and clean, and Carr did not prove so dangerous as the week before, while Gardiner was seldom allowed to get going. Tirrell was as little to blame as anyone. In the first half the middle line played well enough for anything, but in the second was not so effective. Had Walker played for 90 minutes as he did for the first 30, he would have been unsurpassed by any half-back on the field, but the hard, rushing tactics of Jennings and Poulton proved too strong for him in the second half, and he fell away from his high estate. In that first half-hour he fed better, too, and many of his passes led to exhilarating movements, but he did not maintain that form, unfortunately. Still, it was

NOT HIS FAULT

that Jennings scored, or that we were three goals down. I felt cross with Molyneux. In the first half he was almost irresistible, and he had the amateur Springell at his mercy, and the lumbering Poulton did not know quite what to make of him, while he kept Butcher and Hoar on the go persistently. In the second half he wandered into the middle too much, with the consequence that Springell had too much room altogether. Roe was consistent and as clever as ever, and shadowed Carr with great success, and also gave his wing many chances. In common with the others, however, his passing was lacking in accuracy. The right wing was a long way the best—the best on the field. The amount of work Butcher got through was enormous, and he came nearest to scoring. He dribbled and schemed with celerity, and Hoar reaped the advantage, for the pair were too good for McGarry and Allan, and they won even the grudging applause of the Reading crowd. Hoar several times outstripped the opposition and presented the inside men with chances, but to no purpose. Reid was but a shadow of his form of a month ago, and Irvine, while now and then putting in some clever footwork, was much too deliberate, especially against a tousy fellow like Dand. Clarkson suffered, too, but he did not go to work with his customary confidence, and while he got over some nice centres in the first half, he had a poor service in the second, and deteriorated accordingly.

It was a fairly clean game, with the most serious injury going when it was most earned—McGarry getting a nasty rap over the ankle when Molyneux blocked a ball. There were 6,000 spectators, and most of them seemed to voice the opinion as they left the ground that Reading were a few notches above Liverpool.