

LUTON ON THE MARK

Six Goals Scored Against Exeter City.

Two hard nuts remain for Luton Town to crack before the curtain falls on this season, so one must needs be chary in expression as to the future. It is a remarkable feat, however, to have captured seven victories out of a possible eight, and we may say that the Town look like winding up the season in a blaze of glory. Although Plymouth Argyle and Portsmouth have each had better runs in regard to collection of points, the former club alone have equalled the record of seven wins out of eight. In fact they took eight out of nine before they came to Luton and lost. If the Town can get over the awkward problem at Northampton next Saturday, they will equal the "Pilgrims' " feat.

They played brightly enough against Exeter to satisfy most of us, and if all the chances had been taken there would have been a sorry tale for Exeter. Faster and cleverer throughout, they overwhelmed the City defenders, and won on their merits. It was a curious game in many respects. After a long period of sparkling play, in which Exeter were not always fighting a forlorn hope, judging by the steam they put into it, there would come a dull, scrambling time, and then that passed, and we had the players striving their utmost, and working at top speed again—now dribbling, now passing, and occasionally hanging the ball from one side of the field to the other, and so keeping the defenders on the run. And most of the fruitless errands were those undertaken by the City backs. They had

A MOST UNHAPPY TIME.

and but for shakening off on several occasions the Town forwards must have come close to double figures.

The conditions were almost ideal. The ground was not too hard, the turf was in splendid trim and a credit to the workmanship of Bert Day, and the weather was fine without an embarrassing manifestation of the sun. If there were one little disconcerting feature it was to be found in the fact that the ball was very lively—and, of course, there was also the poor attendance, for fewer than 6,000 spectators turned out to congratulate the team on their splendid run of success since March and Hoten came upon us.

Hoten has brought much improvement to the town team, but the most obvious of all is, I fancy, the value of a flying start. In every game he switches on the electric current as soon as the ball is started, and but for an unlucky stumble we might have had a goal when only Reid and himself had touched the ball. Reid started by passing to Hoten, and the latter burst through the opposition and was close to the penalty area when he stumbled, and Pollard managed to get the ball before he could recover. But the fluid was let loose; Exeter were defending desperately, and Pavey had saved before the game was two minutes old. The third minute had not been ticked off when there was a hectic struggle on the Town left, and when the ball came out ROE gathered, slipped past a couple of opponents, and then his left foot drove the ball hard into goal. Pavey sprang for it and tried to touch it over the bar, but it fell behind him and into the net. It is many a long day since a goal was more lustily cheered than that, and Roe was—well, just Roe.

Exeter played furiously for a time, and were only beaten back with difficulty, but more strong attacking by the Town brought Pavey

A LOT OF TROUBLE.

Jennings was prominent with smart mid field work, and he sent a low pass through the middle for HOTEN to pounce on it and sprint past Pollard and Mitton, run round Flynn and shoot into the net as Pavey came out. It was a good goal in spite of the Exeter players' protest. The fault lay in the fact that they came forward a second too late to put Hoten offside, as was the intention.

The Town had much the better of the game, and Reid put in some strong shooting and very good passing, but he was unlucky, and BUTCHER got the third goal. Jennings lofted the ball over the defenders' heads, when Butcher darted through, and although Flynn tried hard to recover, and Pavey came out too, the Town forward got the ball past them into the net. Before the game could be restarted the whistle sounded the interval.

Again the Town re-started in enterprising fashion, and Hoten and Reid met a centre from Hoar and had only Pavey to beat. It seemed as if they would miss the chance but HOTEN eventually got the ball through all right. The worst period of play followed, and big kicking and offside were the order for some time. Just at the more ragged stage Hoten got possession in his own half. He tore past the backs, and Pollard fouled him without stopping him, but the referee signalled the offence, instead of letting play proceed and giving Hoten his chance. But the Town player had his due a minute later. Snapping the ball in midfield, HOTEN broke clear through by means of wonderful swerving and finally shot the ball

WITH BEAUTIFUL ACCURACY

into the farther corner of the net, Pavey being helpless. Near the end came the sixth goal, for after BUTCHER had dribbled through nicely Pavey managed to stop the shot, and prevent Reid taking possession, but Butcher ran in and put through. Exeter's goal had several narrow escapes before this, and Pavey was fortunate, for both Butcher and Reid hit the post. At the other end, too, Gibbon had his most difficult moment of the match, and that was when Crockford cleverly headed a centre from Matthews, but the keeper made a smart save close to the post.

Exeter's forwards showed neat footwork at times, but they got little help except from Crompton, and met with such keen tackling that they could not get in a shot without being hampered. Crompton was the pick of the whole side, and the defence, except Pavey, was not smart enough to cope with the Town's attack. The goalkeeper did well, and I do not think he was very much to blame over the first goal.

Gibbon's job was almost as easy as Billy Edwards'—programme purveyor. He had one really difficult shot to stop, and got it away smartly. Graham played even better than on Monday, his rushes being well timed, and his kicking true. He needs to modify the height and length a little, as does Tirrell, but the Town captain was again in form, and although most of the danger came from the Exeter right wing, it was minimised by Tirrell's positioning. Jennings was suffering from a bad toe, and Molyneux had strained himself, and both showed traces of the injuries early on, but they played with their wonted dash and vigour, and gave much help to the vanguard. Roe played with his accustomed polish, and head and feet did grand work.

The forwards were

IN EXHILARATING MOOD.

Before the game someone asked me to give Reid an encouraging word. It was quite unnecessary, for I have tried to do it ever since he took Simms' place, but he is young enough to be told faults just as he is young enough to cure them. On Saturday he failed to score, yet he was a fifty per cent. better centre-forward than during the holiday games. He did not try so many blind rushes, but used his wits, and he gave Clarkson half-a-dozen of the daintiest passes. His shooting was good, too, and with a little better fortune he would have scored on two or three occasions. He has only to "cotton down" to Hoten's intelligent moves to pile up many goals. Hoten was "the brilliant" of the line, and I hope my reference to his temperament when he first came is now understood. Only a "temperamental" player can make those thrilling solo efforts at top speed with the ball travelling as if tied to his boot. Save in one respect his style is the nearest approach to Steve Bloomer's of twenty years ago that I have ever seen. His goals were well deserved, for they bore the stamp of the artist and the opportunist. Butcher played as skilfully as ever, and that must not be overlooked in the compliments to Hoten, and he and Sid Hoar in unison gave Crompton a rare grueling, although the veteran by no means came off second best every time. Hoar touched his gilt-edge again, and Clarkson put in a lot of fine work, and often made a mess of Coopland's intentions, for the ex-Arsenal half-back had an unhappy experience.

Mr. Lethaby did better than at Exeter, although he made some quaint interferences with the progress of the game.