

STILL CLIMBING.

Luton Complete The Double Over Millwall.

TWELVE POINTS OUT OF FOURTEEN.

(By "CRUSADER.")

LUTON TOWN 2 goals

MILLWALL ATHLETIC Nil

LUTON.—Gibbon; Anderson, Graham; Walker, Jennings, Millar; Hoar, Green, Kerr, Butcher, Hoten.

MILLWALL.—Lansdale; Fort, Hill; Pembleton, Gomm, Hankey; Kingsley, Moule, Smith, Dillimore, Gore.

Referee.—Mr. W. E. Russell, Swindon.

Two gentlemen were passing an opinion on the match-card of the match. Their comments were entertaining to unparticular ears, and they were condemning all and sundry that might have a part in it? They were disgusted because the Millwall forward line was altered two or three times. Had they followed the daily papers they would not have been surprised. There were daily alterations from Tuesday until Saturday, and the final change was made on Saturday morning. Indeed, I should not be surprised to learn that the team was not settled until the players entered the Town dressing room, for there was one other well-known Millwall player present. But their concern could not be comparable to that of the Millwall directors who came to the match. At no time did the visiting forwards look like spoiling that lamentable record of the Town defence—the series of six games without giving a goal away. It is a splendid performance, and Saturday's game brought the number

UP TO SEVEN.

Those who read the figures I gave in the "News" on Thursday will now look forward to the match with Bourne-mouth and Boscombe next Saturday. The Town defence have only to keep a clean sheet then to equal the finest performance since the war. Before the game there were some misgivings, due to the absence of Till, for it was thought



Graham.

that Graham might not fill the job safely. The fear was banished long before the interval. The Town were undoubtedly the better side, and thoroughly deserved the victory. It would not be fair to the Millwall defenders to say that the Town were better fore and aft. In the attacking department the disparity was most marked, but the Town

backs were seldom extended, and Tom Gibbon once more took his bonus for holding a watching brief.

On the other hand, the Millwall backs put in a very hard day's work, and they earned a bonus they will not get.

On the whole, it was a fine, clean, sporting game, there being very few fouls, and once more it is a pleasure to say that Mr. Russell conducted the game well.

THE PRINCIPAL FACTOR

in Luton's success was the middle line. It must have been painful to the loyal little band of Millwall's followers to see their favourites so completely at the mercy of the Town half-backs. There were long periods in which Anderson and Graham never had an opportunity to show their paces, so thorough was the domination exercised by Jennings, Walker and Millar. I am not going to say that theirs was a faultless exhibition, because the perfect half-back has not yet been born, but while everybody agrees that our three can hold their own in any company as spoilers, there is not the same unanimity about their ability to feed. On Saturday, however, there were many compliments to that quality, and I am bound to say that the understanding between the halves and forwards to-day is as good as anything I have seen this year. This was the secret of the Town's success, as it is very surely the main reason for the Town defence's immunity from defeat during the last two months.

There was seldom any doubt about the result after the Town had got the second goal. That point was in

THE NATURE OF A GIFT,

but it must have effectually eclipsed any hope that the visitors had of taking revenge for last week's defeat. But the issue would have been safe a long time before then had the Town forwards taken their chances. The line went to the attack with a vim, earnestness and skill that was exhilarating. Both the passing and dribbling were delightful, and in this first half there was not so much of the cramping of Kerr as we have seen in recent games. The fault was more apparent in the second half, but the play of the line generally was very fine, and won much

open play. Millar on several occasions brought into action a clever back-kick that upset the calculations of the visiting right wing, and it was from one of these taps that Hoten received the ball and went away. When everybody was expecting a gentle tap into the middle, he swung the ball right across the ground. Hoar slipped in front of Hankey in the race for possession, kept his head and made a short cut for goal. He was

WITHIN STRIKING DISTANCE,

and just about to shoot, when Hankey clipped his feet from under him, and the Town forward went down in a heap. There was not the slightest hesitation in making the award of a penalty kick, and Hankey's protests of innocence were unavailing, for he was waved aside at once. HOAR was deputed to take the kick, and it was only poetic justice that he scored with a hard drive hip high.

Five minutes later Jennings took a long shot at goal. The ball rose high, and came down about a yard from goal. There appeared to be no possibility of a goal, for Lansdale got right under the ball, and it fell into his arms. He did not close on it smartly enough, however, and it fell down his legs and rolled towards Kerr. The goalkeeper made a great attempt to recover, but KERR slipped past him and shot into the net. It was a bad blunder of Lansdale's, and Kerr is ever on the look-out for such opportunities.

During this half the visitors appealed for a penalty against Graham for "hands," and nine referees of ten would have allowed it. There were many in the stand that were of the opinion that the award should have been made, but

THE REFEREE EXPLAINED

the position and the law when he said after the game that he did not give penalties when the ball played the man. The fact was that Graham was moving forward on the run when the ball came across at a fast pace and struck his arm. Personally I doubt whether Graham ever saw the ball properly, and I said so at the time, but there were many who thought that a penalty would have been the correct decision. The only difficult shot that Gibbon had to save in this half was a fast, low drive from Dillimore, which he did well to put round the post.

The second half was almost as much in the Town's favour as had been the first half, and many fine chances were missed. The game was wearing late before Millwall made a strong attack, and it was sustained well, the halves backing up the forwards well, but Gibbon was not seriously troubled. The chief anxiety hereabouts was whether the fog would spoil the game when the end was so near. One could not recognise the players in either goal, and in the stand there was a fear that the visitors had scored once, for there was a big shout. Kingsley swung the ball across and we could discern Gibbon moving to intercept, and then go sprawling. The ball had somehow gone wide. Luton's nearest attempt came when Hoar

BEAT THE OPPOSITION

cleverly and then slipped the ball right across the goal-mouth, but all the inside forwards missed in the most unaccountable fashion, and when Hoten got possession he was not very favourably placed, and Lansdale saved.

The victory puts the Town in a better position relatively than they were last year, and perhaps those who have been moaning without remission during the last three months will take note of that fact. They are one point better off than they were last year as a result of their matches with the same teams. The goal average is nothing to boast about, but will be if the defence continues in its present invincible form. Twelve points of a possible 14 is too good to last, of course, but if the next two months are as fruitful as the last two, we shall begin to talk about promotion, and be justified.

The solidity of the defence was maintained. Gibbon was not often in evidence, but Anderson again played finely, and there was no better back engaged. Graham

PROVED WORTHY

of the confidence reposed in him. He made no mistake in his kicking, and he was sharp and resolute in tackling. Everybody was pleased to see that there was no trace of his knee injury. Jennings played the captain's part to perfection, and was as masterful and energetic as ever. Walker also reached his top form, and faced the better of Millwall's wings with conspicuous success. Millar was without superior, and no middle man fed better than he. His position seems secure on this form.

The forwards received more of the ball passes on the carpet than is their custom, and the result was to be seen in

the number of times they got away with it. Butcher was not so prominent as he has been in the last three or four games, but the ground was very heavy, and against him. Yet he played a thoughtful game, and gave both Kerr and Hoten a lot to do. Green also looked after his partner well, and if his shooting boots were to be found, he, too, would hardly be in the slightest danger of being replaced. (He did score in the first half, according to the Town players, and the spectators, and Hill hooked the ball out when it was over the line. It appeared to be well over, even from the stand, but the referee thought otherwise.) Much the same may be said of Kerr, who is holding the line together better than ever, but we are not getting

THE THRILLING DASHES

we had come to look for. That he got another goal was a gratifying feature. The wing men were the best, but it must not be overlooked that they owed their many opportunities to the adroitness and intelligence of the inside men. Hoar and Hoten played well, and although Hoten invariably does things that make people regret that he should be on the extreme wing, the forward line as now constituted is the best available. Both were fast and enterprising, and if Hoten muddled with the facility that Hoar gets them across, the chances would be increased to a large extent.

Port and Hill were fine backs for Millwall, and Gomm a magnificent centre-half. Pembleton was not as successful as the previous week, although he got through a lot of work, while Hankey was not consistent, although doing well at times. Dillimore was the smartest of the inside forwards, and the wingers got precious little to do.

At the start it seemed as if the attendance would be the smallest of the season, but 7,000 were looking on before the first goal was scored.