

GRUELLING GAME AT GILLINGHAM.

VALUABLE POINT FOR LUTON.

TOWN HALF-BACKS IN FORM AGAIN.

(By "CRUSADER").

GILLINGHAM	0
LUTON TOWN	0

GILLINGHAM.—Fox; Robertson, Hendrie; Jones, Henderson, Read; Battiste, Smith, North, Hall, Needham.

LUTON.—Orr; Anderson, Till; Walker, Jennings, Millar; Reid, Green, Kerr, Hoten, Bonsall.

Referee.—Mr. L. E. Vickery, Birmingham.

Pat Tirrell knows as much as any player about football grounds in the South of England. Describing in his quaint way the Gillingham ground the other day, he said that it was "downhill both ways." So it is, and he might also have added that there is a slant crosswise. But it was in very much better condition than anyone expected. There was practically no mud, although a Cup-tie had been played on it the Wednesday previous; and there was more turf than is to be found on most grounds at this time of the year, although rather lumpy in places. The game would have been much better but for the havoc caused to the intentions of the players by a rough sou'-wester. This had more of the play than either team, for as soon as the ball was lifted off the ground, the contestants were at a loss to know just where and how it would fall. And in the second half it brought rain along with it: at first a drizzle, but then increasing in violence until just before the finish, when a torrential downpour swept the ground.

All things considered, it was

AN INTERESTING GAME,

with very little to choose between the teams. At times the play was decidedly vigorous, without any great amount of vice. Vigour, however, is one of the main factors of the Gillingham game, and their fierce rushes, when they simply barged through the defence, were very troublesome, especially in the initial and ultimate stages. From the purely skilful standpoint the Town were the better side, being more workmanlike individually and collectively, but there was weakness in front of goal, and our best marksman did not get enough chances.

When the Town won the toss it appeared likely that they would give the home defence a warm time, but after Bonsall had sent in a high centre which the wind carried just under the cross-bar, for Fox to save coolly and neatly, the home team commenced a series of fast, vigorous raids, and the Town goal was frequently in danger. Green changed the scene, and, with Reid helping, the ball was carried almost under the bar, but just as Green was about to apply the final tap he was unceremoniously

KNOCKED OFF

by the burly Robertson, and Fox cleared. Then the Town goal had the narrowest escape of the match, for, from a corner, Orr was beaten, and both Anderson and Till had to kick away from the goal-line. Then Hoten was fed by Jennings, and he dribbled cleverly before shooting with tremendous power from twenty yards, and he had the mortification of seeing the ball crash against the upright high up and rebound almost to the corner flag. It had Fox beaten all the way, for he was nowhere near the ball when it hit the post. Bonsall returned it, but Hoten headed just wide.

The Town made things pretty warm for the home defence after this, but they were beaten back, and play then settled in midfield, the respective defences being well on top, and neither forward line being able to get very near the objective. Had Reid and Bonsall been able to get the ball into the middle the Town might have scored on several occasions, but the latter usually lost it and the latter did too much shooting when passes would have

BETTER SERVED.

Gillingham once got away to drive in a

fine cross shot, but Orr saved magnificently, and at the other end Fox made a most wonderful save from Hoten. The latter again shot in at lightning speed, the ball travelling right for the farther corner of the goal, but Fox made a sensational leap and caught the ball just in time. Only a big man could have done it, and he was cheered to the echo.

Everybody expected that the home team would play better than the Town when they had the assistance of the breeze, but the reverse was the case. The Town played much better football, and, keeping the ball on the ground, they consistently made progress, Green and Hoten being the principals in these raids. Over and over again they worked through, but the finishing was poor, and when the Town halves took a hand in the attack it was not much better. Once Hoten had dribbled past the opposition, but was forced to move to the left, and he was less than a yard outside the penalty area when he was badly tripped, but the free kick was rushed away.

In the closing stages the home team made

FIERCE ATTACKS,

and they were helped by the tendency of the Town to hold the ball close when near their own goal. Orr made several fine saves, and the end came with the Town again moving to the attack.

On the whole a draw was a fair reflex of the run of the game, for if the Town were this cleverer side, the home team were fast and strong, and there was always danger in their assaults. Fox proved worthy of all the good things that have been said of him. He is a splendid goalkeeper, and is young enough to reach the highest honours of the game. Robertson is a type of back similar to Jack Dunn, and he and Hendrie were a lusty pair, neither standing on ceremony. The middle men were good, Henderson being a fine strong player. Jones marred a good display by fouls, and Read also played a cool, resolute game. Battiste, the clever winger, did not get much chance to shine, and the honours forward were shared by Smith and Hall, although both North and Needham were more than useful.

THE PLEASING FEATURE

from the Town's standpoint was the return of the middle men to their best form. They were a bit slow in getting into their stride, but at the end of a quarter of an hour they were exhibiting the onslaughts of the home side with equal vigour, and Jennings was a mighty factor in midfield play. He had three hefty opponents to counter, and he did his work with his wonted vim and fearlessness. Walker was just as good, and his feeding deserved better results, for he often tapped the ball along to his wing, and showed nice understanding with Green. Millar's game was as good as that of the cleverest of the home forwards, Battiste, was seldom in the picture without Millar was sharing it with him, and the policy of putting fetters on the winger took a big load off the Town backs. Anderson and Till were in grand form, and seldom erred in kicking or tackling. One mistake by Till might have proved expensive but for a great save by Orr, and the latter played a big part in the bringing away of a point. He was not overworked, but when it came his way there was a lot of trouble with it. Apart from a penchant for

HOLDING TOO LONG,

and an inclination to exceed the distance he is allowed to carry, he was all that could be desired. Once in the second half he was fortunate to avoid being penalised, for he ran some distance without letting the ball touch the ground. He simply tossed it over opponents' heads, ran round them, and caught it. He did this three times in succession, but the referee did not notify an infringement. There were three saves during the game that justified Orr's claim to the position, for he appeared to be well beaten when he got the ball as safely as could be desired.

Green and Hoten were the best of the forwards, both playing strong, clever football, but having no luck in front of goal. Reid did not repeat his Southend game. Bonsall did better, but should have squared instead of shooting, for Kerr got very few passes, although he gave not a few.

Mr. Vickery made many blunders besides the above, which is an unusual thing for him, for he is usually very smart. Perhaps he also suffered from the several disadvantages that affected the general play. The attendance reached 4,000, the taking being £214.