

NO COMFORT AT NEWPORT.

LUTON TOWN ON THE DOWN GRADE.

FORWARDS FAIL.

(By "CRUSADER.")

At Newport.

NEWPORT COUNTY ... 1 goal
LUTON TOWN Nil

NEWPORT.—Carr; White, Dimmock; Whiston, Nairn, Carney; Charlton, Bell, Connor, Lowes, Cook.

LUTON.—Gibbon; Anderson, Till; Foster, Walker, Roe; Hoar, Green, Kerr, Hoten, Danskin

Referee.—Mr. R. Lethaby, Bristol.

We had come to regard Newport as a sort of harbour where we could pick up a couple of points without much ado, and after the first half of the game on Saturday, in which the Town had been slightly the better side, I thought there would be no question about the destination of the spoils. But ten minutes after the restart sufficed to show that the Town had shot their bolt, for from that period forward the County almost monopolised the attack. They did not monopolise the play, for the Town halves and backs showed that there was little to fear in that direction, but, to be quite frank, there has not been a single game this season where the Town forwards have been so incompetent as in this match.

A study of Newport's performances had brought me to the conclusion that they were a much better side than at any time since the war, but I am among those who think that the Town have also strengthened their side, and I confidently expected a win. There was nothing in the first half to alter that opinion, in spite of the moderate show of the forwards, for, generally speaking, the Town

HALVES WERE ON TOP.

and there were chances coming the way of the forwards, but in the second half the Town vanguard seemed utterly incapable of making methodical headway, and the result was that the burden upon the defence was heavy. Such attacks as the Town made were, almost without exception, individual dashes, and they never played with the understanding and skill of the Newport forwards—not at any time during the game, in spite of the fact that the home attack underwent a change at the interval.

It seemed to me that Newport's victory was due, in the first place, to one of two things, and I cannot make up my mind which: their own enthusiasm, or the Town's disappointment. That Newport deserved to win no spectator could doubt, and I think that the Welsh writers reporting the game were more than generous to the Town, but then, as one of them remarked before the game, "we have to praise your half-backs in every match, because we never see anything better." And it was probably this feature of the Town's play that was in mind when they spoke of the Town putting up such a splendid game.

THE ONLY GOAL.

of the match came five minutes from the end, and it was such a big surprise to the home supporters that they never stopped yelling till after the final whistle, and some of them may still be shouting about it. Yet it was a very fortunate goal, and the scorer himself afterwards told Fred Westgarth, the Town trainer, that he did not know where the ball had gone when it left his foot. There had been some desultory play on the Newport left wing, and Cook suddenly lunged the ball high across the ground. It was not a good attempt at a centre, but CHARLTON had wandered just inside the penalty area, and as the ball dropped he just swiped—I know of no better word—at it with his left foot, and it skimmed across the ground and entered the net close to the farther post, and gave Tom Gibbon absolutely no chance to save.

Thereafter the Town's efforts were easily checked, as they had been almost all through this period, and the game ended with Newport deserving to win on the balance of play.

Tom Gibbon did not deserve to be on the losing side. Only once was he in error, and then the Town goal had a narrow escape. On that occasion the ball was swung into the goal close to the post, with three or four opponents rushing the defence. Gibbon got the ball when on all fours, and in attempting to throw behind for a corner he threw it on to the post, and it rebounded into his arms. The second time he managed to get it behind the line. He made many good saves, but one effort was positively thrilling. A terrific shot rebounded from one of the Town defenders and struck the outstretched leg of Lowes, from whence it travelled at tremendous speed and appeared to be a certain goal, but Gibbon dived full length and turned the ball round the post for a corner. That was

THE BEST SAVE

of the game, and even the most rabid partisans of Newport, and there are few others, could not forbear to cheer. That was during the second half, when the home team was right on top, and only the brilliant work of Anderson and Till saved the situation, for the Town halves

were facing seven or eight forwards, who played with great desperation, and no small amount of skill.

The first half was the Town's by a slight margin only, and once Kerr hit the bar, while several shots were saved by Carr, or went dangerously near the target. Two chances were lost through hesitation. With a little more enterprise Green must have scored after one burst in which he was placed onside because the ball struck one of the home backs and gave him a clear run in, but White, who was in grand form, recovered and took the ball from his toe just in time. The Town got a lot of corners in this half, and in the early stages of the second moiety they gave the home defenders some work, Carr making three or four quick saves, and his backs kicking away from close quarters when he seemed likely to be beaten, but in all the attacks of the Town, both in the first and second half, there was a lack of cohesion and understanding that was as annoying as it was disappointing.

Perhaps the lively ball and ground had much to do with this, but, even then, there seemed little ability to adapt themselves to the conditions. Hoar might as well have been a spectator for all the work he got at any period, and what has come to Green I cannot understand. For three months or more he has been as good a partner as Hoar has had, but of late he seems to have gone off form altogether, and his shooting, which promised to be a great asset to the Town forward line, is an

UNFULFILLED PROMISE.

I have come to the conclusion that there is too much centre-forward play about the Town inside forwards. I think that any one of the three would be a clever leader if he had the right men with him, but the best is not being got out of any one of the three at the present time. Kerr needs nursing to be of value, but the aim of each of the trio at the moment seems to be to get a goal on his own, although this selfishness is certainly not wilful. It is simply the native style of each player. Hoten's display in the first half was that of a centre-forward, and he nearly scored on several occasions, but after the interval the referee pulled him up several times for what appeared to be fair charging, while for similar vigour exhibited by Nairn there was no penalty. This seemed to take the life out of Hoten, and he was no more prominent than Green. Kerr's storming tactics were not much in evidence, but he had two or three good attempts. The wingers got very little work. Danskin had the more, and he centred well on occasion, but he was a long way below the form he showed against Plymouth, and Hoar had less of the ball than any other player on the field, not excepting the goalkeepers. If the inside forwards could only reproduce the combination they showed against the Rangers there could be little fault found with them, but they seem to have forgotten all about it.

The middle men were

THE BEST PART

of the side. Foster was always in the thick of the fray, and he was as good as any man in the line. Two or three times he essayed to force his way through, but the home defenders never shirked a tussle, and he was usually crowded out at the last moment. His height and weight were often of immense service in defence. Walker found Bell a more resolute customer than Connor, but he held the inside men well on the whole, and initiated many attacks, and used the awkward ball well, as also did Roe. The last-named again showed clever footwork, and powers of recovery, although Charlton had more speed.

Anderson and Till were rather shaky in the first half, but subsequently reached their best form, and played sterling football in the second portion, tackling with splendid judgment, and kicking a nice length. Gibbon I have referred to already, and the defence could not be blamed for the defeat.

Newport were of about average skill as a team. There was no particular brilliancy, unless one excepts White, who was a grand back, and the main spoiler of the Town forwards. Carr had not a lot to do, Dimmock was a useful help-mate for White; the halves were worriers to a man, with little to choose among them, for they were quick on the ball, and always ready for a clash. The forwards were patchy, but they swung the ball about a lot more than did the Town, and they were fast enough to give a heap of trouble to the Town defenders. Bell was a rare forager, and all the others showed nice conception of their duties.

Mr. Lethaby, apart from the indifferent reading on the law relating to charging, did pretty well, but of one of the line-men the less said the better.

There were 8,000 spectators, and they thought the game was as clean and entertaining as any they have had at Newport this season.