

THREE OUT OF EIGHT.

LUTON TOWN STILL WANTING A WIN.

At Boscombe on Saturday:

BOURNEMOUTH	2
LUTON TOWN	1

BOURNEMOUTH.—Wilson; Charles-
ton, Lamb; Butt, Smith, Leitch;
Buchanan, Rattray, Davey, Miles,
McCulloch.

LUTON.—Brookes; Anderson, Till;
Walker, Jennings, Mills; Hoar, Cockle,
Keen, Hoten, Dennis.

Referee.—Mr. E. Butler, London.

At Luton on Monday:

LUTON TOWN	1
EXETER CITY	1

LUTON.—Brookes; Graham, Till;
Walker, Jennings, Mills; Hoar, Cockle,
Keen, Shankly, Dennis.

EXETER.—Bailey; Pollard, Flynn;
Colebourn, Jones, Potter; Matthews,
Pullan, Appleyard, Davis, Compton.

Referee.—Mr. H. V. Stott, Tamworth.

After four games we may take stock more seriously, and I believe I am voicing the opinion of the vast majority of the spectators by saying that there is scant hope that the team, as at present constituted, will reach a high position in the League. Some have stated that the team is the worst we have had since the war, and there is a gloomy and grizzly atmosphere wherever the game is discussed, whether it is in the tenuous establishment where matches are won before they are played, or in those places where gather the loyal followers who never go to the matches except to see Luton win. If optimism is an offence, then I am incorrigible. I am not, nor have been, anything like convinced that we have a championship side, but I believe that we have many splendid players, and that we shall have a chance of reaching the heights provided the right combination is secured.

That is the great trouble—to find the balance, the fit of individual ability that will make the successful side. At present there is not one department that is thoroughly sound, and not half the players have achieved the acme of their form. The new men have not fulfilled the promise they showed in practice matches, and the old players have not shown their average form of last season. These facts have to be digested, whether we like them or not, but, to be quite candid, I am not going to subscribe to the view that the players are of poor quality. We have good men, and when the right combination is secured I am sure they will do well. The Town are not alone in early distress. What of Swansea Town? The clubs the Town have met were in lowly positions last season, but they have taken steps to improve their teams, and Gillingham, Bournemouth and Exeter are not going to be candidates for re-election this season. They have recognised the fact that if big men do not necessarily win championships, they are some sort of guarantee against failure. In each of the games with those clubs, the Town have played the better football. None will deny that. The trouble has been that they have not been able to consummate the work by scoring goals.

All sorts of suggestions have been advanced as to the cause of the Town's lack of success, and among them even physical unfitness has been mentioned. How on earth anyone can think that is beyond me. One player has not the stamina of another, but as a team it is only necessary to point out that in each game the Town have played they have been pressing hard at the finish, whereas the opponents have been pretty well used up. That alone disposes of any reflection on Fred Westgarth's work. The long and the short of it is that the coaching hand is necessary in order to get the best combination. Compared with the teams already met, the Town players are small, too, and the tactics to be faced have been a punishing pace, and then a concentration on defence. We have seen that in every game.

It was so at Boscombe on Saturday, for the work of the Town, so far as the conditions would permit, was better than that of the home side, and improved marksmanship would have meant a certain win. It seems to me that a week's hard ball practice, with special reference to shooting, would do a heap of good, but it would disturb the training routine. Is it worth it? Would it reduce stamina and speed? If there is no immediate improvement in

GOAL SCORERS THE NEED.

By "CRUSADER."

the play, I see no other means of getting the desired efficiency.

AT BOSCOMBE.

Luton should have won at Boscombe on Saturday after they had recovered from the disadvantage of having to go straight on to the ground after the long train journey. The defence sustained severe pressure in the early stages, and Brookes, his backs and half-backs, were splendid during a trying time, for they were facing the breeze and a driving rain. When they had overcome this rough experience they went about their work so well that with improved marksmanship they should have had a commanding lead at half-time, whereas the score sheet was blank.

COCKLE opened the score with a beautiful header from Hoar's centre after clever work by Mills, and as Brookes had not been called upon in the twelve minutes that had elapsed from the interval, it appeared that the Town would win. A desperate rally by the home side brought the equaliser, however, for in a misunderstanding between Brookes and Anderson, MILLS got the ball, shot against the bar, and the ball rebounded, struck the prostrate goalkeeper's head and thence went into the net. Dalliace by a defender gave the home team the second goal three minutes later, for Mills, hustled to such purpose that a scrimmage ensued and DAVEY netted.

Thereafter the Town were the better side, and in the closing stages pressed enough to have won, but the shooting was extremely poor, and they retired defeated.

AT LUTON.

Not one of the supporters would disagree with the assertion that if the Town forwards had shot with anything like average precision and promptitude on Monday night, Exeter's goal average would have shown a big deficit. As it was, Bailey gave a splendid display in the Exeter goal, and that, with the wretched shooting of the Town forwards, enabled Exeter to share the points. Less than two minutes from the start, COMPTON got away and beat the defence with ease to surprise Brookes with a ground shot that went through a narrow channel between the keeper and the post, and when the goalkeeper least expected Compton to shoot. I doubt if the Exeter player intended it to go just then, but the ball found its true billet. At rare intervals afterwards, Exeter had the Luton goal in similar danger, with Compton as the ring-leader, but the pressure on the Exeter goal was persistent and heavy, and Bailey must have been truly thankful when the end came. In the last half-hour, most of his colleagues were helping him to keep Luton at bay, and did it so well that only two minutes of the forty-five remained when SHANKLY headed the equaliser from a corner kick taken by Hoar. How narrowly the Exeter goal escaped time after time is beyond description, but Bailey did extraordinary things, and time after time kept the ball out when it seemed bound to score. Forwards, halves and backs were shooting, but few doing it well, and the end came with the points shared.

COMMENTS.

Naturally there was not the difference between Bournemouth and Luton as between Luton and Exeter in the proportion of play. At Boscombe I thought the Town should have won because of the better all-round play when they had weathered the stormy first half, and because the goals that won the game should never have been scored. In the Exeter game it was quite different. The balance of play was so largely in the Town's favour that it should have been measured by a heavy crop of goals. Brookes kept goal well at Boscombe. Against Exeter he was deceived over the goal against him, but hardly blame-worthy. The backs did well considering the state of the ground, and the conditions. Anderson was playing finely until

he got hurt, and just how badly he was hurt is proved by the fact that he is not likely to play before Monday. It appeared as if his knee were hurt, but it was his ankle, sprained during a tackle. It was hard luck. Till also played well, and there was little to choose between them. The absence of Anderson from the game on Monday probably had some bearing on the result, for Graham was very uncertain for a long time. In a measure he was partly responsible for the goal Exeter got, because Compton had too easy an opening. That seemed to unsettle Graham, but after giving us a few qualms, he went into his work with the grit and resolution that is natural to him and that won him his place. Not alone on Graham was the blame, however. Compton got more latitude in the first half than was desirable. Every time he got the ball he was dangerous, but in the second half Walker was more attentive, and kept upon him very closely, so his chances were neutralised accordingly. At Boscombe, Walker did better than on Monday. Jennings again played with great determination and wholeheartedness, and the only fault that could be recorded against him was that so common among half-backs to-day, putting passes in the air instead of keeping the ball.

ON THE GROUND.

As a spoiler he is excellent, and if he would keep the ball down instead of lofting it so often, his critics would not have one argumentative leg to stand on, although, doubtless, some of them would make a few more of the artificial sort. On Monday Mills gave his best show to date, and the more seen of him the more liked is his play. He was rather slow in settling down at Boscombe, but he did fine work later, and against Exeter he was splendid. Of the forward work at Boscombe and against Exeter, one big fault was the poor shooting. The passing was often very good, and the speed enough to satisfy any reasonable supporter, and I am quite convinced that had the shooting been up to the average, we should have heard nothing about the poor play of forwards or halves or backs. The crowd's great need is goals, and then more goals. When this important phase of the game is improved, we shall cease to hear talk about the need for a new middle line or new backs. And the average supporter is apt to overlook the number of chances missed. If the chances are made, then there is not much wrong with anything other than the shooting if goals do not come. The Town forwards had more chances in every game than their opponents, and the middle line would escape blame, if not feeding properly, if the forward shooting was good. The chances have been there, and it only remains for

THE DEFECTIVE SHOOTING

to be remedied in order to relieve half-backs and backs from much of the blame that is apportioned to them, for, naturally when the attack fails, then the defence is expected to remain intact, and there is less forgiveness for defenders than for attackers. Only one change was made in the forward line for Monday's game, and I daresay that Ralph Hoten expected it. He is not in his best form by a long way. Keen had dash enough at Boscombe, but missed chances, but on Monday he was not so prominent, and appeared cumbrous. I think he would improve by full training. Dennis gave a good show in each game, and was always making opportunities, and he and Hoar, although Sid is not yet on his top form, put across plenty of good centres in each game, and especially against Exeter. Cockle's goal at Boscombe was a brilliant effort, but he missed chances, and he was not so good in his general play on Monday, but good enough to be persevered with. Shankly's introduction on Monday was deserved, and I am glad he scored. None deserved it better. Provided the inside forwards combine opportunism with their general work, I am sure the despondency of the supporters will speedily vanish. It is that, and that alone, that makes all the difference between victory and defeat.

Mr. E. Butler, the referee, did fairly well at Boscombe, but Mr. Stott showed up so well on Monday night that we shall want to see him again. He is the type of referee that is very, very badly needed.

At Boscombe and at Luton the attendance reached 6,000.

THE CASUAL SPECTATOR AGAIN.

People who arrived late at Monday's match and left early are to be pitied, for they missed all that was really worth seeing. It is doubtful, however, whether all who arrived in good time saw Exeter's goal scored. Some of them probably woke up to the fact that the visitors had scored, without realising how. It was all done so quickly. "Crusader" seems to have measured the time as ninety seconds, and presumably his observation was well-founded. Brookes must have wondered how it was done. Compton did not explain, but occasionally tried the same thing on again in later stages of the match. Sometimes he must have made the Luton supporters shiver, but he never quite succeeded in repeating this performance. He is a left winger to be watched, however, and watched closely, and other teams who entertain Exeter will do well to keep a weather eye on him.

It was an opening which promised an exciting match, but developments were disappointing, and it was a good thing that there was a firm referee in charge of the game. Otherwise we might have seen a dirty game adopted once the visitors had secured the lead. But a foul on Sid Hoar did not pass unnoticed, and the offender was promptly spoken to. A minute or two later Exeter were again pulled up for a breach of the rules, and the crowd seemed to be of opinion that he was quite a good referee. Later there were times when there seemed to be a thousand referees in one corner of the ground, but the one who was in the middle did very well without their advice or assistance, and probably better than any of the onlookers could have done.

Then Exeter adopted the "Safety First" policy of kicking out on the slightest excuse and wasting time. Two balls were put over the house-tops in quick succession, and a third had to be requisitioned. But what was still more noticeable was the dilatoriness with which a throw-in was taken, particularly if the ball had first to be fetched. It was not unnoticed by the referee, who once whistled sharply to make the visitors get a move on, and from the way he consulted his watch it is to be assumed that he was noting things to justify an extension of the 45 minutes.

Not till ten minutes before the interval did Luton really look like scoring. Then Bailey, who had been dealing well with anything which came his way, dropped a hot one, and anyone who had followed up would have had a very easy chance.

In the second half Bailey was the saviour of his side, although once he must have wondered why the ball still stayed outside the net. He had made some really fine saves, but there came a time when he was on the ground and had not got the ball or got it away. Apparently the Luton forwards were all too excited for anyone to do the right thing at the right moment, and a very promising prospect faded away. Had they scored then they might well have won eventually, for they played very finely up to a point. This point was just a few yards from the net, and an early goal would probably have given them the inspiration for some more. But the final effectiveness was lacking, and the little bit of luck which might have turned the scales did not materialise. Shots which went netwards found Bailey there; others which might have had the erstwhile Luton goalie

beaten went just outside; and many more were never attempted, because just at the crucial minute the Exeter defence was allowed to dominate the position.

Meanwhile Exeter were kept fairly penned in, and kicked out almost monotonously. Again two balls went into the wilds in quick succession. Perhaps it was good tactics, but it was not good sport. Perhaps they were a little bit afraid. As things turned out, they had good reason. There was a long series of those "corners which came to nought," as the regular critics say. Then one suddenly did come to something. Shankly's head happened to be in the way, and Bailey wasn't. He didn't have the chance to be. Luton were level, and the crowd indulged in a due amount of vocal exercise.

Then Exeter obviously had the wind up. There was only a minute or two to go, and they did everything possible to "play for keeps." They succeeded, but they had a very desperate task to maintain their unbroken record. What a pity Luton could not show equal enterprise in the earlier stages of the game! Then they might have got their first two points out of one match, and Exeter might have gone home with their tails down.

They must have been very glad they had Compton and Bailey in the team.

Because this casual critic has been to matches on two successive Mondays, it must not be assumed that he is in danger of becoming a victim of the disease which takes people to the Town ground on every available opportunity; but it certainly seems a long while till Brighton come on Saturday!