

"SWANS" ESCAPE WITH A POINT.

Luton's Strong Fight Against League Leaders.

BRILLIANT DEFENDERS.

(By "CRUSADER.")

LUTON TOWN NIL
SWANSEA NIL
LUTON.—Brookes; Anderson, Till; Walker, Jennings, Millar; Thirlaway, Shankly, Kerr, Reid, Dennis.

SWANSEA.—Robson; Morley, Langford; Holland, Collins, Bellamy; Hole, Deacon, Fowler, Thompson, Nicholas.

Referee:—Mr. J. W. Lucas, Fulham.

Perhaps most of us were satisfied with the result, because so many of us expected worse. I was not a little surprised, however, after the game, when a brother of the same estate said that Swansea should have won, and there was in his voice a hint that they deserved to do so. Well, I did not see it that way, for on the run of the play the Town had more and better chances of scoring, and did much more of what is called "pressing." That is an elastic word, however, and in these days we are inclined to include the most desultory raids in the term "pressing." There was never in this game any prolonged siege, for the defences were always too clever for the attacks. In the case of the Town it was what most of us like to regard as the sportsmanlike method, namely, a minimum of offside tactics, and

CLEAN, STRAIGHT TACKLING.

In the case of Swansea the methods came in that category which impels certain spectators to yell "Play the game." Not because there was much dirty play, but because of the use of the offside theory. I agree that the employment of the offside rule does spoil play to a large extent, but that is no more the fault of those who play it than of those forwards who have not the gumption to beat it. After all, it is not the back who breaks the rules, it is the forward, and I am bound to confess that I have a sneaking regard for the intelligence of a full back who can successfully work the oracle. Two years ago Harry Higginbotham showed us how it could be overcome, and the Town gave Swansea the thrashing of their history. Alas, there was no attempt to do it on Saturday, or I am absolutely convinced that the Town would have won. It is hard on spectators to see their favourites pulled up, and it is an awkward job for better officials than Mr. Lucas. Even allowing for the large number of times the Town forwards were diddled, however, they had enough territorial superiority to have won the match, and most of us came away from the ground feeling that if Swansea were a clever side, they would be fortunate to go into higher company at the end of this season.

There can be no question that the Town team is now

PLAYING MUCH BETTER

than at any previous period this season, and while it may be hard on Joe Mills, who has been the most consistent half-back we have had this term, it is inadvisable to meddle with the team that takes five points out of six, even if they are from home matches. The play has been such as to lead us to hope that we may yet manage to win a game away from home.

There was not much advantage in winning the toss, for the wind was choppy and often played tricks with the ball, and as the ground was very lively it was not a matter for wonder that there were more than a few errors in the early stages. The visitors were first to become wise to the conditions, and for a quarter of an hour were the better side. Thereafter, the Town enjoyed the better of the game, and the play became a little too keen at times. Once more the Town were the cleaner side, and three trips were recorded against the visitors before one against the home team, and it is a fact that Anderson and Till once more went through the game without having a free kick against them. The visiting backs could not claim a like immunity, although Morley was very clean in all his work. The Town halves were quick in recovery, and brightly as the visiting forwards played, they often found that they had to outwit the same man twice before they could get in a shot. It was this quickness of recovery that took the sting out of the "Swans' attack, and I have never seen Fowler cut such

A FORLORN FIGURE.

The general play of the Town, indeed, was much quicker, and there was none of that staidness that was so apparent the previous week. Every man was going as fast in the middle of the second half as he was in the first ten minutes. I do not know if it were the importance of the occasion that would not allow them to get tired, or if it were extra training, but they certainly were quicker. The only slowness was in front of goal, and here they certainly dillyed too long. It does need someone that will impress the need for quick shooting. I know that players are apt to think criticism of this kind is from lack of appreciation of the difficulties, but that is not the case with me. I do know that players are anxious to score, and that the crowd expect goals from impossible positions, but allowing for that, I am certain that this hesitation in front of goal

is the main reason for the Town's failure this season. It is better to have shot and missed, than never to have shot at all. No reasonable spectator expects a goal with every shot, but he expects attempts, and that is the Town for wards chief fault.

In midfield work again on Saturday they were capable of overcoming even the clever defence of Swansea, and some of the combined efforts were good enough for any team, but the finishing was very poor.

In the first half there were two or three GOOD OPENINGS MISSED, and in the second the number was exceeded. Swansea failed, too, and while their forwards were nippy and skilful in the first half hour, in the after part of the game they relied almost entirely on raids by individuals, and they, too, missed one or two easy openings.

Neither goalkeeper was ever much worried, and if Brookes had the more shots to stop, they were not very serious, and were usually from outside the penalty area. He was pleased to show a clean sheet against his old colleagues. Anderson and Till were in fine form, as they usually are when the opposition will play football. Till gave a grand exhibition, and was the best back on view. I say that without reservation, for I don't recall a single instance in which he could be accused of fault. His tackling was magnificent, his returns, with either foot, from any position were well judged, and he has never done better in any period of his career. Anderson was again in something approaching his best, and for artistic footwork I am certain there were no two players on the field to surpass these. The middle line may have been rather too careful for the defence to spend as much time as we would have liked in assisting the forwards, but it should be borne in mind that they were holding the forward line that had scored more goals than any other in the Division, and

THEIR PRECAUTIONS

were justified. I do not give the palm to anyone of them. All three played splendidly and got through an enormous amount of work with credit. Jennings simply shut out Fowler, and the Swansea attack became a line of scouts rather than an organised force. Walker again played finely, and won much praise. His close attention to Nicholas was not altogether relished by the ex-Stoke winger, but Walker was one of the Town who never called upon the referee to use his whistle. Millar quite maintained his good form, and once more had the liveliest member of the attack to face, and while he did not always prevent Hole getting in a good centre, the Town half-back had the better of the duels.

Reid is entitled to first mention again, and it is gradually being driven home that he is likely to develop into a really good inside left. He has a lot to learn in the way of frillery, but for effectiveness he is second to none of our complement, and we must not forget that he has only just attained legal manhood. There was not much to choose between the flanks in the matter of merit, for both played well, and Andy Kerr often sent them on their way with clever passes. Shankly was clever and useful to Thirlaway, but he made a bad blunder when he used his hands to a centre from Thirlaway. I do not think he could have headed the ball, but Kerr and Reid were both waiting, and would have had an easy opening. Thirlaway and Dennis were fast and centred well, but the end of it all was vain, for there was no goal. If some touchstone could be found whereby the Town forward line, as it is to-day, could be given just that bit of finish that is needed, the team would hold its own anywhere in this Division of the League. That is

ALL THAT IS REQUIRED

to make the Town a good side. For the visitors Robson had an easy day, for he had in front of him two great backs. I think of the two I preferred Morley only because he was the cleaner, for Langford did one or two little things that were not nice, whereas Morley went for the ball. Otherwise I am not sure that Langford was not altogether the better, for he kicked with power and precision from any position. Collins was the brainiest half-back on the field, and if any player made openings for his forwards it was he. Time and again he sent them through, and he made his passes skilfully all along the carpet. His colleagues were industrious, but unskilful by comparison. In the front line the wing men were the danger spots after the opening stages, for the inside men were not as effective as Luton's, and spectators who had come to see the cleverest line in the League, were very disappointed.

On the whole there was not a lot to be disatisfied with on the general play, but Mr. Lucas is still more earnest than efficient, and the spectators were rather hard on him. He did better in the second half, however, and was in a fair way to confidence at the finish.

There were upwards of 7,000 spectators.