

DOWN IN THE DUMPS

LUTON TOWN AGAIN LOSE BY NARROW MARGIN.

RANGERS LUCKY AT HOME.

(By "CRUSADER.")

QUEEN'S PARK RANGERS ... 1 goal

LUTON TOWN Nil

RANGERS.—Hebden; Pierce, Plunkett;

Hirst, Richmond, Pigg; Spottiswood, Middleton, Johnson, Birch, Ford.

LUTON.—Mingay; Graham, Till; Walker, Jennings, Millar; Moffat, Shankly, Thompson, Thomson, Dennis.

Referee.—Mr. J. R. Butler.

One might almost repeat exactly the report of the game with Reading as a description of the game at Shepherd's Bush, for the failure to annex two points at the expense of the Rangers was due in very large measure to the inability of the forwards to consummate good work in the open. As last season and the season before, the Town were suited by the heavy conditions, and their general work entitled them to the honours, but the Rangers got the all-important goal that settled the issue. It was the first game the Rangers had won this season, and once more we had the poor consolation of an admission from the home supporters and officials that they had been fortunate to win. There could be no doubt about it, for, with the exception of one or two periods in the first half, most of the Rangers' good work came from raids, whereas the Town attacks were more sustained, more threatening, more promising. Alas!

PROMISE WITHOUT FULFILMENT

is not very satisfactory, and, however strong our sentiments about this or that player's ability, unless his value is written in the results, he should be superseded.

There was only one forward of ten who appeared to realise the most successful tactics. That player was Birch, who was the oldest of the twenty-two, and, by all the laws of nature, he should have been the least effective under the new conditions. There were faster and more vigorous forwards, men who did more galloping and snorting, but he conserved his energies, kept his position while waiting for the ball to arrive, then proceeded to draw opponents and to transfer to the colleague most advantageously placed. He made the Rangers a fairly good side. Without him they would have been a mob.

The only goal of the game came after ten minutes' play, and thus early there had been

THRILLS AT EACH END.

The greasy ball skidded over the slippery turf at a great pace, and it was from a long kick by one of the Rangers' halves that the ball went straight towards Graham. The pace at which it came from the ground deceived the back, who was only able to deflect it towards his right. He recovered and overtook it, but Ford, a stocky left winger, had followed up quickly. He knocked over Graham as the latter was about to kick the ball, and then centred neatly for JOHNSON to head an easy goal.

The Town forwards were playing the more accurate football, but they were not so dangerous as the Rangers, for the simple reason that the latter tumbled into the Town backs and never gave them a chance for a free kick if there were any possibility of hampering them. For half-an-hour the Rangers were the better side. Then the Town improved immensely, and they frequently came within an ace of equalising. Opportunities were missed through

LACK OF STEADINESS

when dead in front or through dalliance in breaking through, but Shankly twice shot very close, and Hebden made some good saves. After the interval the Town had a much greater share of the game. Their fierce attacks, however, were just as fiercely opposed, but, all the same, they had very hard lines on many occasions. Hebden was prominent with clever saves, yet twice he could not get the ball away, and there were two or three players lying on the goal line with the ball only a few inches beyond reach, and inviting the successful touch. Then Dennis beat Hebden all ends up with a fast drive, only to see the ball strike the bar, and the lusty home defenders scrambled it away. Hirst once handled flagrantly in the penalty area, and the referee actually raised his whistle to his lips, but did not blow. The Rangers' raids chiefly came through the splendid use made by Birch of his wingers, who lay well up the field, and he seldom failed to get the ball right out to them. It was through these cunning moves of the veteran that the Town goal was several times in danger, and once Mingay brought off

A GLORIOUS SAVE

from Spottiswood. The home goal, however, underwent far more severe pressure, and in the closing stages, when the Rangers were showing signs of distress and delaying the game by every conceivable means, the Town could do everything but equalise.

Once more it was a case of the Town deserving the spoils on the run of the play, but failing because of the weakness in finishing. The changes could not be said to weaken the side generally, and I would first refer to Norman Thomson. During the practice games he impressed everybody by his skill, and it was no surprise when he was preferred to Reid at inside left. He played at Merthyr, but was then dropped. He returned to the team on Saturday, and I am bound to say that if this game is a fair indication of his merit in League football, then I know no player on the Luton list that is more entitled to his place. He was the most skilful and thrustful forward on the Town side. His control and his thoughtfulness in passing, the

BEAUTIFUL ACCURACY

and judgment of some of his taps to Dennis, were gems, and much as I like to see a marksman like Reid in the attack (whatever his demerits in other respects), there is in Thomson's work a latent genius. He was better than Shankly, well as the latter played again, except for shooting, and for constructive work in attack he was as good as any inside man I have seen at Luton since the war. Neither did he hesitate to tackle the robust defenders. More than once he came out of a tussle with credit.

I have said much about him because sup-

porters have wondered why he was not in the team, but on this form I should plump for him every time. Shankly again played a strong game, and the inside wing positions appear to be solved. Jim Thompson was as thrustful and forceful as usual, and of him, too, it might be said that he was wholly satisfactory if he were quicker off the mark and used his right foot as deftly as his left. I think it is

A MATTER OF CONFIDENCE

more than anything else. Thompson used to be a left winger, and he always appears anxious to get the ball into position for a shot with the left foot. Defenders with any sort of brain soon detect this weakness, but once on Saturday he took them by surprise, for he sailed in with a great shot from the right, and was only just out of his proper gauge.

Moffat played better than in the previous games, and seems to be gaining confidence. Against fierce tacklers he held his own, and sent over some nice centres. Dennis was not so successful as he has been, and should have made better use of some of the passes he received, but he came nearer getting the share of points than did any other forward.

Conditions such as those of Saturday generally find Jennings at his best, and this game was no exception. His audacity paid, and he got more recognition from the Rangers' crowd than he gets at Luton. There were fewer people there who go simply for seeing a man's mistakes without noting his worth, and the Town captain was

THE MAINSTAY

of the middle line. Millar was not at all comfortable in the early stages, but he improved vastly, and in the second half was an important link with the attack. The understanding between him and Norman Thomson evolved some of the brightest phases of the struggle. Walker had a tough, one might say a rough, opponent. Indeed, he had the best wing on the field to meet, for the vigorous methods of Ford were allied to the craft of Birch, and the man who can compass this combination will be a very live member.

The change at back, necessary through Anderson being injured last Monday, made for one little disadvantage. Till, who took Anderson's place, was the most polished defender on view. He played up to Anderson's best standard, and that is saying a great deal after Anderson's two displays against Watford and Reading. He tackled skilfully, and his kicking was

BEYOND REPROACH.

the ball skimming time after time just beyond the reach of the home halves to fall at the feet of the Town forwards. On the other hand, Graham did not appear to be so confident at right back as at left. He had the heavier task, perhaps, and he played a very fine game, but there was now and then a sign of hesitation. Apart from that the defence was all right, for Mingay was in form, and is not likely to be displaced while he keeps goal as on Saturday.

For the Rangers Hebden was a good goalkeeper; Pierce and Plunkett were hefty more than happy; Richmond was a skilful pivot and probably the most sportsmanlike player of his side. His colleagues were just moderate. Birch was the outstanding forward, and Ford also did well.

Rain fell for the greater part of the game, and also kept the attendance down to about 5,000.

F.A. CUP.

Biggleswade v. Leighton United.

Following up their fine win against the R.A.F. (Hendon) the previous week, Leighton United maintained their good form on Saturday, when they journeyed to Biggleswade and defeated the local club in the Preliminary Round of the F.A. Cup Competition by 4 goals to nil.

As the score would suggest, the United were much the better team, their forwards in particular being superior to the Biggleswade quintette, while they were certainly better in defence. The home club sadly missed Jesse Tasker, their captain and left full back, who was nursing an injured knee.

Rain had been falling heavily for some hours before the kick-off, and with the exception of an interval of 10 minutes, continued throughout the game. In consequence, playing conditions were the worst possible, and really good football was at a discount. The "gate" also suffered, there being only about 500 spectators present, including an enthusiastic band of Leighton supporters.

Mr. G. Rowe, of Luton, was in charge, and the teams were as follows:—

BIGGLESWADE.—G. S. Bones; Titmus, F. Jeeves; Capt. Adlow, V. O. Young, S. Walker, W. Devereux, W. Leach, B. Payne, W. Wood, W. Bray.

LEIGHTON.—C. Bracey; W. Tyas, A. Saunders; F. Birchall, A. Birchall, H. Day, A. Evans, A. Walker, T. Whitworth, T. Day, G. Horne.

Loosing the toss, Leighton were set to face a heavy rain during the first half, but despite this handicap they played up strongly at times. Their goal, however, had a distinct let-off early on, when Bray centred perfectly, and from point-blank range Leach fired over, while shortly after Bracey saved finely from Payne. The Biggleswade defence was inclined to be shaky under pressure, and after 20 minutes Walker had a clear run for goal, but instead of shooting he passed to Horne, who sent in a splendid drive. This Bones only partially saved, and EVANS smartly had the ball in the net for the opening goal. Biggleswade had the slightly better of the exchanges until half-time, and were perhaps unlucky in failing to equalise.

The second half found Leighton a very aggressive side, they displaying a far better understanding than did their opponents, who for the most part were on the defensive. Receiving a pass from S. Day, WALKER increased the lead five minutes from the restart, and shortly after WHITWORTH practically made the issue safe with a swift low shot that travelled just inside the upright.

Biggleswade could make little impression on the visitors' defence, and 15 minutes from the end Walker shot for an untenanted goal, only to see his effort frustrated by Young, who handled. H. DAY made no mistake from the resultant penalty. This concluded the scoring, although on one occasion Bones saved sensationally from Walker. Result:—Leighton United 4, Biggleswade 0.