

ONLY ONE POINT.

LUTON'S SERIAL STORY OF FAILURE.

Exeter's Defence.

(By "CRUSADER.")

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LUTON.—Mingay; Till, Graham; Richards, Jennings, Miller; Miller, Shankly, Thompson, Reid, Dennis.

EXETER.—Pavey; Pollard, Charlton; Pullan, McDevitt, Shelton; Matthews, Kirk, Blakemore, Myers, Compton.

Referee: Mr. C. F. Moon, Bristol.

The serial story of forward failure continued for a further melancholy chapter last Saturday, when Exeter City were glad to take away from Luton a point that they could never have been very hopeful about in the first hour of the match. Until this deficiency is remedied, the Town will remain in danger of nursing the wooden spoon. As scores go nowadays, the Town defence is giving nothing away, and if the forwards could do their work nearly as well, the club would now be chasing Plymouth and Reading at the head of affairs.

The latest game was not dissimilar from that at Swindon the week previous. Dashing, often clever, work in midfield was ruined by wretched finishing. On the general run of the game, Exeter were made to appear a very inferior side—

STRAGGLING AND RAGGED

in all except defence. Those who go to see more than goal-scoring in a match will be sorry if changes are made that wipe out the neat and skilful approach work, but the delight of goals stands first all the time, and in League football the chief factor is the result.

At half-time one of the Exeter visitors was wondering how on earth Luton came to be so near the bottom of the League. "We haven't played a better side this season," he said. After the match he smiled and said he required no further enlightenment. The slowness of the inside forwards to snap their chances was the reason, and every follower will agree.

For about ten minutes the "Grecians" gave the Town a few frights, for they swung the ball out wide to the wings, and the Town flank halves and backs were disposed to concentrate in the centre of the field, with the result that Compton made a few sparkling runs and Mingay had

SOME ANXIETY.

Almost imperceptibly the Town's methods were changed, and twenty minutes from the start the visitors were drawing their forwards back to help the defence. It was very necessary, for the Town forwards and halves were making small fry of the visiting half-backs, and but for the stalwart defence of Pollard and Charlton, and the fine judgment of Pavey, the first goal would not have been delayed for 35 minutes, poor though the marksmanship of the forwards was. Thompson had taken two hard drives, one of which was blocked, and the other deflected for a corner kick. Miller placed the flag-kick splendidly, and after the ball had been headed about in front of goal, SHANKLY shot into the net. Pavey was the most prominent part of the picture to the interval, and the Town should have had a penalty when Pollard openly pushed Thompson over as he was right in the goal-mouth and about to shoot—

PAST PAVEY, PERHAPS.

The second half was almost a repetition of the play, with the exception that the only goal fell to the City. Attack after attack was launched against Pavey's goal, and a dozen times the inside forwards seemed bound to succeed, but they never got beyond the promising stage. The visitors were confined in their own half for a long time, but every now and then the ball would be slithered out to Compton or Matthews, and a raid would follow. Once Myers had a gilt-edged opportunity, but he had not the courage to go into the defence, and he clean missed his kick. Mingay had one or two ticklish propositions, and then Compton got the better of Till in a very fine burst, centred perfectly to BLAKEMORE, who shot on the run, and Mingay was helpless.

The visitors were nearly, but not quite, content to hold their equality. They

WASTED TIME

in many ways, and the referee had to speak to one or two of them for dallying. Generally, however, they were packing their goal area to prevent the Town scoring. It was a justifiable precaution, and they succeeded. Pavey kept goal brilliantly, and his backs kicked and tackled fiercely, but there should have been a decent tally for the Town long before the referee sounded the final whistle.

It was all very disappointing, and it is an absolute necessity for the directors to set about putting the matter right. The search for inside forwards has been proceeding for some weeks, to my knowledge, although one can get nothing official for publication. Some hundreds of miles have been covered, and journeys made in the direction of all four points of the compass, and it is possible that there may be some measure of success reported this week. The sooner the directors can make the announcement, the better it will be for the club from a financial aspect, as supporters—perhaps spectators is the better word—are

REFUSING TO ATTEND

the matches. It may not be the best of sportsmanship, but every club in the country suffers in the same way. Success brings followers, and it is a human trait that the following falls off when dissatisfied.

Mingay again did well in goal, but had comparatively little work. Till had a cleverer opponent in Compton than in any game this season, and although he more than held his own for the greater part of the game, was once beaten with unhappy result. His kicking and tackling were as good as ever, and Graham was better than in the two previous games. The latter now appears to have discovered that the defender who hesitates is more likely to get hurt than he who goes in promptly. The middle line played splendidly. Miller showed welcome improvement, and

ALMOST BLOTTED OUT

Matthews and Kirk at times. Jennings was as wholehearted and effective as ever, and Richards had not been playing long before he had won over most of the crowd to the opinion that he is not likely to be superseded. There is still, however, to my way of thinking, more of a suggestion of the full back about his work, as there is of the half-back about Till's play, and while I should hesitate to advocate any change while the defence is doing so well, I confess I should like to see the experiment. I believe that Till would prove to be one of the cleverest half-backs the Town have had since the war. As a back, he has had no superior in that period. Miller's return to the attack was some improvement, and he could have done with more passes of the type that Compton received. Shankly was playing too close to him to get the best out of him, and once more the best passes he received came from the middle line.

EXPERIENCE WAS AN ASSET.

for he invariably placed the ball to advantage at the end of his exploit. Shankly was as clever a

ever, and none better deserved to score. Thompson's slowness was apparent, and although he got in a number of fine shots, they were usually delayed so long as to enable the defenders to cover up. Reid has not returned to the usefulness he showed at the end of last season, and his affliction has some bearing upon this. He has been made the butt of ridicule by a considerable section of the crowd, and upon him has been thrust the onus of failure. He is equally responsible with the others, but not more so, and I decline to single him out for condemnation, whatever others may do. Dennis had not nearly as many opportunities as he should have had, but it is clear that none can seriously threaten his title to the extreme left position.

For the visitors, Pavey was a splendid custodian, and good a man though Bailey is, one could not be surprised that he had been superseded if this were Pavey's average form. Pollard and Charlton were a tough pair of backs, never giving up and having to bear the burden of weak half-backs. Now and then McDevitt did well in the middle line, and the only forward to be dangerous consistently was Compton.

The attendance was below the 7,000 mark—a poor bank to back a League club.