

OUT OF THE CUP.

Luton Town Defeated at Aberdare.

(By "CRUSADER.")

When Luton Town entrained on Friday afternoon for the first stage of the journey to Wales it was under something of a cloud. It had been a bad week for the club. Three or four directors were ailing; Jennings was due at the hospital for an operation; Jim Miller had asked to be rested on the grounds that he was off colour; Love was suffering an attack of influenza; there seemed to be no settled idea as to who should be in the team; players were left behind after thinking that they had been chosen, while players who had not been chosen were included in the party, and so it was a rather higgledy-piggledy sort of business.

Of course, many of these troubles were related, and no board of directors on earth could have avoided some of them, but the effect on the players was probably more real than apparent. All, however, did their best, and though Aberdare won, it was not because of any lack of effort by the Town team, but rather because of a continuance of the ill-luck that dogs the club from week to week.

Over and over again this season I have held that they did not merit defeat, and, with more reason than ever, I repeat that in regard to the game at Aberdare. They had the worse of all that was going, for while the "Darians" got a very lucky goal—deserved because of the opportunism of their centre-forward, Smith—the Town had an apparently good goal disallowed, and should have been awarded a penalty-kick for a case of "hands"—as glaring an offence as I have ever seen occur in a penalty-area, for the player did not punch the ball; he simply cuddled it in his arms after he had fallen over in the goal-mouth.

There was no question about the offence in the minds of the spectators close to the spot or in those of the Town players, but the referee and his linesmen were so far from the scene that they evidently could not agree that an offence had been committed. The Town players appealed to the referee, who stopped the game and consulted the linesman, but with a negative result. On top of that the bar above the head of Brown, the home goalkeeper, was twice hit when he was beaten, and he also made many brilliant saves. To cap all this Shankly missed a gorgeous chance of equalising, when from two or three yards' range he shot and hit the goalkeeper when he had the rest of the goal at which to shoot.

For the life of me I cannot see why the goal they scored was disallowed, for the ball is always playable even when, as in this case, the goalkeeper has it in his possession. Brown did not lie on it, but had it in his arms as he was prostrate in the goal, and Thompson kicked it away from him and into the net. It was a distressing business, and will appear doubly so now that Aberdare's success has given them the opportunity of going to Newcastle, where a big gate will compensate them for what will probably be a heavy defeat.

The absence of Jennings, Miller, and Love made changes compulsory, and the eleven that took the field was not the happiest at the club's disposal, though, whatever the selection had been, the whole of the supporters would not have been pleased. Anderson, Moffat, and Reid, all of whom figured in the second eleven the previous week, were called up for duty. I am not going to blame these as having played worse than the others—nothing of the kind: the trouble was that the team was not well-balanced, and the biggest drawback of all was the absence of Jennings.

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This was especially noticeable in the first half, when Harwood, the Aberdare pivot and captain, was the life and soul of his side. But for him they would have been a very moderate side, as was clearly demonstrated when he was absent for 20 minutes in the second half owing to an injury. Millar did heaps better in the second half, and twice came within an ace of scoring—once striking the bar with a powerful shot, and just before the end having another great shot brilliantly diverted by Brown.

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Just as the absence of Jennings was sorely felt, so the removal of Millar from the left-half position had a weakening effect. Graham did his best, but he, too, did not loom very brightly until the game was wearing late, and as Richards, in his anxiety, found it necessary to give assistance to his colleagues, so his position was affected adversely, and Taylor, Aberdare's left winger, who is being sought by important clubs, got more freedom than otherwise would have been the case.

Anderson took Graham's place at back, Moffat that of Miller at outside-right, and Reid the place designed for Love. It would not be quite fair to any player to say that the individual strength of the position was marred, but the fact remains that balance was missing. There was a lop-sidedness in attack, and the defence was not robust enough—that's all. Every man did his utmost, every man made errors occasionally, and every man did bright things, but the most-feared thing happened and the most-wanted thing did not, and so Aberdare won by the only goal of the match.

The victors would have accounted themselves lucky to get a re-play, hence they were doubly happy to bring off a victory. Their rearguard could not compare with Luton's from the standpoint of cleverness, but was a much more robust proposition. Their halves were just moderate as a line, though Harwood played a fine game until he got hurt. Their forward line was nippy and combined much better than Luton's, swinging the ball about better, but was made to appear stronger than was really the case because of the lack of forcefulness in the Town defence.

Aberdare had the better of the exchanges in the first half, but in the second the Town were by far the more dangerous side. Purdy kept goal cleverly, but had nothing like the exacting work to perform that fell to Brown.

There were 4,823 spectators, and the gate receipts only totalled £266 8s. 3d.

ABERDARE ATHLETIC	1
LUTON TOWN	0

ABERDARE.—Brown; Walsh, Brophy; Russell, Harwood, Irving; James, Miller, Smith, Burnham, Taylor.

LUTON.—Purdy; Anderson, Till; Richards, Millar, Graham; Moffat, Shankly, Reid, Dennis, Thompson.

Referee: Mr. A. F. Davis, Bristol.