

TABLES TURNED AT LUTON.

A SPIRITED GAME.

At Luton on Boxing Day.

LUTON TOWN	5
GILLINGHAM	3

The Town ground was heavy, and on the stand side very muddy for Saturday's game. Whatever the conditions and the pace at Gillingham, there was no weakening sign among the players in the first half, but long before the end many of them were as near cracking up as could be without collapse. Teeming with thrills, accident and incident were such that the afternoon had reached the gloaming ere the issue was beyond doubt. Actually, the last goal was scored just about the time the game would have finished had there not been several stoppages, and it was a fitting climax.

The better team won; there can be no doubt of that. The constitution of the team did not win popular favour entirely, and one of the dissatisfied supporters just before the game was pointing out to me that the only sound basis of argument was results. I agreed to a very large extent, but surely the directors had confirmation of their action in this result. Five goals is something unusual for Luton. It was the first time the Town supporters had seen them get five, and the forwards played well enough to deserve that number, even though three came from free kicks. Moreover, it is noteworthy that Gillingham's defence had only once this season been thrice beaten, and that was at Watford on December 5th. Their methods of meeting attack were

NOT ALWAYS PRAISEWORTHY.

for they handled more than any team seen at Luton since the war. Five times within a few minutes Riddock was penalised, and he was the chief offender in this respect. There were far too many fouls, and, handling apart, there was not a big difference in the number of offences by either side.

Richards captained the side, but lost the toss, and Gillingham had the better of the opening play. A free kick against Agnew brought danger to the Town goal, and a little fusillade of shots threatened to open Gillingham's account. The Town halves were disposed to dally instead of clearing, and Gillingham were quick to take advantage of this. Ten minutes had elapsed when they met with the reward of persistence. A flag-kick was cleared, but Jones met the ball as it came out, and sent right across to BERRY, who beat Purdy at close quarters.

The Town's play then underwent transformation. From a lackadaisical crowd they became a live force, and bore down on Ferguson's goal with great vigour. Two attacks were beaten off, but Moffat centred, and Robertson pulled the ball down with his hand. DENNIS made no mistake with the penalty kick. The visitors were hard pressed now, and time after time their goal escaped in extraordinary fashion. Nichol was cautioned for a bad foul on Reid, and Ferguson

SAVED BRILLIANTLY

from Agnew. The latter was then fouled on the edge of the penalty area, and THOMPSON scored with a glorious drive. Gillingham's goal was bombarded, and their defenders, Ferguson excepted, seemed demoralised. Suddenly Edmed broke away, and he and McKee were working into goal when they were upset. It transpired that Till brought Edmed down heavily, and a penalty kick was awarded. NICHOL equalised, and Gillingham were fortunate to cross over on level terms.

Luton were soon hammering away on the resumption, and after Dennis had just missed with a hard low shot, REID gave the Town the lead with a first-time effort following a scrimmage. Straightway a free kick was given against Millar for a foul on Edmed, and the ball was sent up the field. There appeared to be little danger when Edmed crossed the ball over to BROWN, but that player tried a snap shot, a clever hook shot that found Purdy a shade too far out of his goal, and the ball passed just below the bar into the net.

For a long time the Town had the better of the play, but Gillingham

DEFENDED DESPERATELY.

and Ferguson made some wonderful saves. The Town's attacks were launched with refreshing speed and vigour, and the halves and wingers

swung the ball in front time after time, while Till, playing as a fourth half-back, gave a lot of help in this way, and the inside forwards fired at goal with unusual persistency. Now and then Barry and Edmed made raids, but Purdy had not a lot to do, and the play was chiefly near Gillingham's penalty area. During one fierce attack there were two appeals for penalty kicks, and the referee once consulted the linesman. Unfortunately for Luton, that official did not see a glaring offence, but a little later, though the referee was unsighted, the linesman was not when Jones deliberately punched down a centre from DENNIS, who scored from the subsequent penalty kick. It was after this that Purdy came into the picture more, for the visitors, encouraged by previous happenings, went courageously for the equaliser. Purdy made several fine saves, and then came the goal that put the issue beyond doubt. The ball was sent up the field, and Thompson put out to Dennis, who went hot-foot for goal, pursued by Robertson. He got in a shot that beat Ferguson, but struck the bar. As the ball came out, THOMPSON met it and shot into the net.

Even then Gillingham were not done with, but they were held in check, and the game ended as stated above.

I thought Purdy might have prevented the third goal against him, but when a goalkeeper makes saves such as he did subsequently, he may be excused an occasional error of judgment. Graham and Till had their hands full throughout, but it is clear they are operating behind a middle line that has

LOST IN STRENGTH

since Jennings' accident, and are getting a lot more work. They did well in this game considering the nature of the ground. The halves played resolutely, and Millar is near his very best again. He and Richards nursed the forwards cleverly, but I thought the latter hung on too long at times instead of getting in the pass that would have caught the opposition unready and his own forwards well up. Neal played a bustling game. He was at home in the sludge, and though lacking the finer points, he kept a close watch on Brown, and gave none cause to regret that he was given the position. The forwards, with Jim Thompson as leader, seem quite a different force. His strong, thrustful rushes and his attention to the opposing backs are harassing factors for defenders, and he and Reid were very lively workers. Agnew was of a rather different type, and Reid will do better if he keeps position more, for Agnew several times found the inside right position with beautiful passes, but there was no one to take them. Still, Reid did very well indeed; he fed Moffat nicely, and he shot splendidly. The little winger was not always successful at close quarters, but he was very fast and put over many fine centres. Agnew and Dennis got on splendidly, and the winger gave one of his best displays. He deserved his penalty goals because he did so well otherwise.

Gillingham owed an immense debt to Ferguson. He kept goal grandly. His backs and halves were hard workers, Nichol being the best of the bunch. Edmed and Berry were the best of the forwards.