

ANOTHER BRACE FOR LUTON.

Aberdare Defeated After a Stubborn Game.

(By "CRUSADER.")

Satisfaction at winning afforded the only source of elation over the match on the Luton Town ground last Saturday, for the play left a good deal to be desired by the Town supporters. In some respects, Aberdare Athletic were a little unfortunate, though I think the Town were the better side. One wondered at periods in the game if the Town players were feeling too cocksure of success, for there was too much individual play, and the combination was a long way below the standard of recent games.

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The tricky wind had an adverse effect on control, and with the ground very easy and the ball light, the pace often beat the intentions of the contestants, and Aberdare were not inferior to the Town in their ability to master the conditions. Much of their play was very clever, and some of the movements were as effective of attack as the best the Town could do. One could understand the Welshmen's improvement during the last two months.

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When NORMAN THOMSON scored for the Town after less than ten minutes' play, and Aberdare lost their goalkeeper owing to an injury sustained during the scrimmage from which the point was obtained, there were visions of a big score by the Town. These did not mature, for James, the inside left of the visiting side, went into goal and put up a game of which a regular custodian might have been proud. One of the visitors told a Town player that James was as good a goalkeeper as Brown. One can well believe it after this exhibition.

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James has figured in many positions for the Welsh club, and he has ever proved a dangerous and worthy opponent. On Saturday in this new role he showed coolness and resource, and, although by no means a big fellow, he dealt as safely with high shots as with low, fielded cleanly, and was never slow in getting the ball away. He had plenty of opportunity to prove his ability, too, though the Town inside forwards were not in their best mood.

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Playing against the stiff breeze, the Town held the upper hand, and Purdy was only occasionally tested, and there was nothing very exacting in the first half, though there were a few determined attacks by the visitors, thanks to the bright passing and the excellent team spirit of the Welshmen. Norman Thomson was generally the leading factor in the many raids of the Town, and so Moffat and Jim Thompson were often in the picture. The left wing also worked well, and with better shooting there would have been a stronger lead than the one goal before the interval.

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In the second half Brown played at outside left for a time, and now and then he got in a very nice pass, but the visitors were kept on the defensive for the greater part of the game. The Town, however, never showed the ability to grasp the correct method of dealing with the tricky breeze which was at their backs, and the halves were nearly all the time over-kicking their forwards, so that the work of James and his backs was of a much simpler nature than it should have been.

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Aberdare had never lost heart, and eventually the repeated failures of the Town encouraged them, and the game became of a more even character. Brown then went into goal again, and with James back in the forward line the visitors' attack showed more snap than hitherto. In a strong movement by the Town forwards, however, one of the visitors handled just outside the penalty area, and JIM THOMPSON took the kick and beat Brown with one of his speciality shots, the ball crashing into the net at terrific speed.

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The goal made the crowd more comfortable, but the play of the home team generally did not improve, and the visitors went at it harder than ever. Harwood played magnificently, and was responsible for many attacks. When from his good work Martin made a delightful move that gave TAYLOR possession, the ex-Cardiff City player ran close in to beat Purdy all ends up. It was well deserved, and gave the Welshmen new heart. They attacked vigorously, and Purdy made a grand save at full length.

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There was no further score, and the end came with the Town victorious, but they had very little to crow about except the fact that they had ensured their position in the League for another week, and once more averaged a point per match with the goal average just on the right side. The position is a great improvement on last year's, being ninth as against eighteenth on the first Saturday in March, 1925.

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Purdy had an easy afternoon, and both Graham and Till played splendid football again. The pair of them are doing so well that the wonder is there have not been other clubs after them. Till's skill is maintained week by week in remarkable fashion, and Graham is fulfilling the promise of his early days. The halves had an off day, comparatively speaking. Perhaps we have become so accustomed to their consistently good form that we were inclined to be harsh with their second half deterioration.

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In the first moiety there was little to find fault with, but afterwards they neither spoiled so well nor fed so accurately, and no department was more harassed by the wind than the intermediate line. Neal, who took part in several of the clever movements of the right wing in the first half, fell off unaccountably late in the game, and Rennie's feeding was not so good as usual, though he did stout work in defence during Aberdare's best time. Millar had his work cut out to hold Martin, and honours were about even at the finish.

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Poor finishing was again the disappointing feature forward. Norman Thomson's brilliance was sustained, and some of his almost effortless craftsmanship astounded the visiting halves. Time after time he hoodwinked opponents and then pushed the ball through to Moffat or Jim Thompson, and now and then swung the ball right over to Agnew or Dennis. Moffat was in his most entertaining mood, and gave Brophy a gruelling time, but I thought that he could have centred several times with more profit to the line.

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Agnew and Dennis were as assertive as ever, and the latter has never had a partner that has tended him with such unselfishness and skill, and their good work deserved better reward. Jim Thompson was always in the thick of the struggle and had some rare tussles with the Aberdare defence. He missed one or two good chances through hesitation, and we still bemoan the ineffectiveness of his right foot.

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Aberdare played pluckily, and James deserved the warm commendation he got as goalkeeper, while Brown had plenty of opportunity to prove his skill. Walsh and Brophy defended stubbornly, and Harwood gave a splendid show. Martin and Taylor took the honours forward, and they were the main figures in Aberdare's attack.

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LUTON TOWN	2
ABERDARE ATHLETIC	1
LUTON.—Purdy; Graham, Till; Neal, Rennie, Millar; Moffat, Thomson, Thompson, Agnew, Dennis.	
ABERDARE.—Brown; Walsh, Brophy; Miller, Harwood, Nicol; Sheldon, Martin, Smith, James, Taylor.	

Referee, Mr. R. M. Neville, London