

# CAN THEY STAY THERE?

## Luton Town Lead the Competition.

### MERTHYR BEATEN.

(By "CRUSADER.")

No club can remove Luton Town from their hold of the top position on the table before Saturday, when it will be possible for Southend United. The place in the sun is not so secure as it might be, and, undoubtedly, there should have been another point to strengthen it, for Swindon Town should have been soundly beaten at Luton instead of taking away a point. The play of the Luton team, while it has brought better results than expected, is not convincing, and while every supporter will be happy to see the name at the head of affairs right through the season, if such a happy issue is to eventuate, there will need a strengthening of one or two departments.

These are the middle and forward lines, and it is not because the players are not as good as last season, when they raised the club to a high place, but because of the conditions. After each of the games so far the players have been bruised and braised by contact with the extremely hard ground, to say nothing of the dusting they have had in the several desperate fights that have taken place. For not a single game has been won without a severe struggle, and if there were no other evidence available, the scores speak plainly enough. It is as well to

#### FACE FACTS SQUARELY,

and it should be pointed out that four of the games have been played at Luton, and four of the successes have been by the odd goal, while the fifth was by two goals clear. There have never been more than two goals scored by the team yet. That is just as eloquent of something lacking as is the fact that the defence has never given away more than one goal.

In the early stages of last season the defence was regarded as the weak spot, and rightly so, but this season it has been their strength and stay, and although Harry Mingay made a bad mistake on Saturday, he, Graham and Till are probably a sounder trio than any Luton have had since the War. They did

#### FINE WORK

again on Saturday, when Merthyr Town were trying to lower the Luton colours, and, while we hope they will continue to triumph, they cannot be expected to make good every match. It's rain that is wanted, and a heavy and continuous downfall for a few days would be as good as a new player.

On Saturday Merthyr had quite a good share of the first half-hour's play, because conditions suited them much better, and, while the Town players were seldom sure how and where the ball was going, try as they would to control it, Merthyr hit it

#### HARD AND OFTEN,

and by that means, with good following-up, managed to take the lead through SUTHERLAND after the game had been in progress a quarter-of-an-hour. Graham, hard-pressed, passed back to the goalkeeper, who dropped the ball, and Sutherland rushed in and managed to scrape it over the line. The equaliser came after a fair spell of pressure, Norman THOMSON cleverly dodging a defender after Pointon had passed, and Lindon managed to touch the ball, but could not prevent it entering the net. The initiatory work came from Richards and Jim Thompson.

These goals came before the interval, and the Town should have established

#### A GOOD LEAD

before retiring for refreshment, but they were not quick enough to seize chances. In the second half they were right on top, and the visitors were made to look a very unskilful side, though they never lost heart, and played desperately to retain a point. The winning goal came after close play on the right. Gordon received from Pointon, passed to Millar, who, in turn, fed WOODS so nicely that the ex-Arsenal player had an easy task to move in closer before beating Lindon at close range.

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## THE FEATURE

of the remainder of the game, and he played finely throughout. His safe hands and judgment were remarkable, and although fortunate on several occasions, his display deserved to keep down the score. Time after time there were half-a-dozen players scrimmaging in the Merthyr goal area to get the ball through, but they never succeeded again, and the win was by the narrowest possible margin.

The defence has been referred to already. All three are doing well, and if Graham and Till can maintain this form we have

## NO NEED TO FEAR

for their department. Gordon substituted Rennie in the middle line, owing to the latter's illness. He was brought in at the last moment, and, while he did not put up the strong game I expected, did not do at all badly. I like his quiet style of feeding the forwards as well as in depriving opponents, but he is not masterful enough. One thing should not be overlooked. Gordon had a hard game on Wednesday night, and during last week was considerably upset by domestic illness. Mrs. Gordon is in Luton, and has been seriously ill, and the Town player has had

## A HARASSING WEEK.

Under those circumstances I think he did really well.

Richards and Millar gave their best in the second half, but in the first moiety shared the general inability to control the ball, and to understand the methods of the visitors. In the second half they mastered thoroughly, and with the chances they supplied the forwards should have got a lot more goals. In the many fierce struggles that took place in midfield the Town were stronger and cleverer, but were

## COUNTERED STUBBORNLY

by the visiting defenders. Pointon and Clark, the latter crippled, got over good centres, and the inside wingers contrived to give Jim Thompson a lot of passes, but he was invariably crowded-out when he tried to shoot. Apart from the shooting, one does not like to complain of the forward work, because the line attacked so often. Jim Thompson was always in the hurly-burly, and did hefty work all through, while Norman Thomson and Woods showed intelligence, though their passes were not always models of accuracy.

Lindon was the great figure of the Merthyr defence, but his backs also did well, and the middle men, until they were out-stayed, while Bell and Pither did good work in attack, and Sutherland as the utility man, seldom in his original place, but always doing something worth while.

LUTON TOWN ..... 2

MERTHYR TOWN ..... 1

LUTON TOWN.—Mingay; Graham, Till; Richards, Gordon, Millar; Pointon, Thomson, Thompson, Woods, Clark.

MERTHYR TOWN.—Lindon; Woodward, Pedler; Crewe, Bishop, Clarke; Murphy, Phillips, Bell, Sutherland, Pither.