

FINE FOOTBALL BY LUTON.

MISFORTUNES ROBBED THEM OF SUCCESS.

Thomson's Disallowed Goal.

(By "CRUSADER.")

NEWPORT COUNTY 2
LUTON TOWN 3

Newport:—Maidment; Hinton, Smith; Nairn, Bowsher, Carney; Johnson, James, Pugh, Gittins, Forward.

Luton:—Mingay; Graham, Richards; Gordon, Rennie, Millar; Clark, Thomson, Reid, Woods, Dennis.

Referee:—J. H. Collins, Birmingham.

There was much disappointment, I am told, on the Town ground on Saturday evening, when the result at Newport was "phoned from the 'News' Office. Those present, by their own experience, may judge something of the disappointment to the handful of Luton followers present at Somerton Park. Newport hold a prominent position on the League table, and one could well understand it after witnessing their performance, yet there was not a more fortunate side in the country. "On the run of the play you should have won," said a couple of Pressmen to me after the match, and while I think that Newport had rather the better of the second half game, the Town deserved a winning lead at the interval.

There is little satisfaction in criticising a referee at any time. For half-an-hour I felt sure, for once in a way, that there was not.

A "HOME TEAM" OFFICIAL

In charge, but have never seen a worse decision than the one Mr. Collins made to deprive the Town of a good goal that would have given them a lead of 3-1. I will deal with the incident later, and mention it here because I want to say that never since I have been in Luton have I seen a Luton team play football so near the class of the best teams before the war. The footwork was simply delightful, and the combination made the spectators hold their breath one minute, shout with delight as the consummating shot did not score, and then applaud lustily the artistic construction. So confident of ultimate success were we that none of us troubled very much at the time about the referee's fatal blunder. It was

FOOTBALL SIMPLIFIED.

and the grand thing was just this—the secret of success—the ball brought to the carpet by the Town players first time, and kept there. All three halves, with Woods, Norman Thomson, and Dennis at times, seemed to have the ball on a string, and the home halves were mystified by the side-stepping and swerving, and the way the Town players side-footed the ball. Let me say now, that in spite of the defeat, I am more convinced than ever that the Town have a great chance of promotion if they persist in these methods, and will shoot a little better. The football was the cleanest seen at Somerton Park since the war, according to officials and supporters of the County, and they were delighted with the match. We were equally pleased with

THE ABSENCE OF ROUGHNESS

and dirty play, and no referee had an easier task so far as the behaviour of the players was concerned. Otherwise, Mr. Collins and one of the linesmen seemed to be influenced by the crowd and the frequent appeals of the home team. I do not blame players for appealing; it is natural if they think there is advantage to be gained, though it would be much better if the F.A. instructions to players were literally followed, and appeals were not made.

The opening stages were even, with both teams showing cleverness and pace, but gradually the Town settled down,

and no man seemed more at home than Richards, who never dallied in clearing, and, though

HAMPERED BY THE PACE

of the home front line, had good understanding with Graham and Millar. Our fears for him soon vanished.

Then came a Newport attack, and I regret to say that they got a goal they did not deserve, owing to Mingay holding on too long. Catching the ball close to the upright but on the flag side, he held it a fraction of time too long, and Pugh, who had done nothing so far, knocked the goalkeeper over the line for a corner. This was well placed, and GITTINS twice shot in, but the ball was charged down. A third time he got it, however, and his shot hit the underside of the bar, and the ball dropped behind Mingay. It was from this point the Town began to dominate the game. Attack after attack was launched, and had the aim of the marksmen been lower,

THE EQUALISER

must have come. Eventually Dennis received after Millar, Rennie, Woods, Norman Thomson and Reid had taken part



S. REID

Signalled his first appearance this season as leader of the first team by scoring a fine goal.

In a brilliant movement, and the winger dropped the ball to the feet of WOODS. He never hesitated a moment, but caught the ball on the drop, and from fifteen yards' range it flashed into the net, beating Maidment all ends up. Twenty-five minutes had elapsed, and the Town then rose to their highest level. Again and again they outwitted the opposition, and when Reid shot the ball was stopped by the backs; he bundled Hinton over and shot again, and Maidment, out of goal, managed to stop the ball. Reid again hit it on to the goalkeeper, and it was all but over the line when Thomson rushed up and put it into the net. It was a good goal, and the referee immediately turned round to the centre with arm raised, but the home players

CLAMoured ROUND HIM

and grabbed his coat. Then he turned and gave a free kick against Thomson for offside. It was a hopeless decision, and utterly unjust, but suited the crowd immensely. Still, the Town did not quibble, but simply resumed their game. When another "all-round" movement gave REID a chance he was sandwiched by the backs; he was first to extricate himself from the mess-up, however, and promptly crashed the ball home. It was a fine goal, though not so thrilling as Woods' effort. The Town had the better

of the exchanges to the interval, and a little more promptitude in shooting would have given them a stronger lead at the interval.

LUTON TOWN 2
NEWPORT COUNTY 1

Newport re-arranged their front line for the second half. Pugh, the boy who had been brought into the leadership at the bidding of the crowd, began at inside left, Gittins crossing over to inside right and James going centre. The change worked well, for the home side played desperately, but were well held by the backs. Johnson was fast and lively, and after seven minutes got over a high ball which JAMES headed into goal; Mingay, by a great effort, beat the ball down to the feet of James, who promptly kicked into the net and equalised. The Town then opened out again, and while not attaining the brilliance of the first half, more than held their own, and had Clark got the ball into the middle even occasionally, there might have been

A DIFFERENT RESULT.

As it was, the game continued even. Then Newport made another forward change, Pugh changing places with Forward. The latter proved a lively vice, and Pugh did better than before because he sent the ball across first time, and Mingay was greatly worried. However, this was not the cause of the next goal. Bowsher sent the ball to Gittins, who, to beat Richards and Millar, handled it down to his feet. The Town's appeal was unheeded by the referee, and the ball went to JOHNSON, who was clear, and suspiciously off-side. The second appeal was ignored, however, perhaps rightly, and the winger, without stopping the ball, shot first time, and from twenty yards' range it travelled right across goal, swerving past Mingay's out-stretched arm, and entered the net.

JUST INSIDE THE UPRIGHT.

The Town were not done with, though, and came again at a lathering pace. Clarke dallied when good passes came his way, and Smith beat him time after time. With a minute to go there was a terrific attack as the result of a speedy movement, and the home defence was at sixes and sevens. Clark dashed in, and was on the point of kicking the ball into the net when one of the home backs deliberately pushed him over on to his face. The Town loudly yelled for a penalty kick as Maidment gathered and lay on the ball, but the referee refused, and came and made the Town players move aside while Maidment rose and had a free delivery of the ball. This wretched blunder by the official

SEALED THE TOWN'S FATE.

After such a gallant fight, it was distinctly rough on the Town to lose point at all. They did not play so well in the second half as in the first, but held their own, and should never have lost. Without questioning the position of Johnson when he got the third goal, and it might be questioned, there was the handling by Gittins, obvious to all in the stand; the disallowance of Norman Thomson's perfectly good goal; and the failure to administer the correct punishment when Clark was overthrown. One of the Town Newport County that beat us, but the Welsh crowd. Certainly Mr. Collins seemed to loose his nerve, and was unequal to the occasion. What would have happened had the players been inclined to get out of hand, I do not care to surmise, but have never felt that the team has so

UNDESERVEDLY LOST

a match.

Mingay's propensity for challenging a charge was indirectly responsible for the first goal. The others I do not lay to his charge. He saved some good shots, but had no more to do than Maidment, after seeing Richards for the first time as a back, I am converted. Though in such an unusual position as left back, he played splendidly. His weight in the scrummages, grand heading, fearlessness, and prompt and accurate kicking compensated for lack of pace. The halves were magnificent, especially in their constructive work, the passing among themselves as well as with their forwards, being far, far above anything

they have yet given. Gordon's association with Norman Thomson might have been life-long, so excellent was

THEIR POSITIONING

and understanding. Rennie did not last, weakening in the second half, but until then he came rightly up to the quality he showed in the friendly game with Barnsley, last year. That is good enough, much better than in his previous games this season, and perhaps the game at Clapton on Thursday deprived him of some of his stamina. Millar was on his best form, and shared with the other two in the tribute concerning combination.

Thomson and Woods were the outstanding forwards. In jugglery and passing they were wonderful, feinting and swerving, and nonplussing the home halves time after time, with consummate ease. Woods' goal was "the best I have seen for years. By an error, the telephonist dispatching my report to the "Telegraph," said this of Reid's goal, but it was Woods' shot elicited the remark, as it drew from the crowd

THE LOUDEST CHEER

of the match, with the exception of that when the winning goal was scored. Reid got a goal, as almost certain to do if given a few chances, and although often jockeyed offside, played well, hustled the defenders, and was ever ready to take a shot. He should have had better return passes from Clark, whom he gave many ground balls. Nothing seemed to come right for the winger, who could not complain of the feeding he got. Dennis did not have so many chances to shine, and was not so good as he can be, but did splendid work in the first half.

Newport's goalkeeper was very safe, and the backs played a great game, Smith especially, while Bowsher was a very fine pivot. Of the forwards Pugh, heralded by much trumpeting, scarcely saw the ball in the first half, for Rennie had him in complete subjection. Forward was the best of the attack, though all played fast and attractive football.

The ground was in finer condition than I ever saw at Somerton Park, exactly to the liking of the players, and the 6,500 spectators got splendid value for their money.