

TRIERS WITHOUT TRIUMPH

LUTON TOWN FAIL TO BEAT BRISTOL ROVERS.

Team Spirit Lacking.

(By "CRUSADER.")

LUTON TOWN 1 goal
BRISTOL ROVERS 1 ..

LUTON.—Harper; Graham, Till; Black, Richards, Millar; Pointon, Woods, Panther, Agnew, Clark.

BRISTOL.—Whatley; Bennett, Haydon; Rowley, Forbes, Roberts; Douglas, Barratt, Culley, Clennell, Evans.

Referee.—W. E. Russell, Swindon.

Just before the game I had a chat with Bob Hawkes, who will ever remain the pride of Luton football followers, and a pattern of sportsmanship to amateur and professional alike. The debacle at Chelsea was mentioned, and various other aspects of football. Bob confessed that as he grows older he wants just as much, if not more than ever, to see Luton Town win. What he misses from play to-day, speaking generally, is the spirit of wanting to win for the honour of the town of Luton as well as the Town Club.

SLIP END SPIRIT.

He used as an illustration the Slip End spirit, and said that in the little village on the outskirts of the town everybody wanted to see the village club win, and he himself felt like that about Luton. Just as the most famous captain the Town ever had sized up the strength of the opposition in his day, so he summed up exactly the cause of the failure of the Town this season to achieve the ambition of the supporters. What he said was the increasing sentiment of the crowd as the game went on, and it has been so in more or less degree for several months. When one compares the lifeless exhibitions of this season with the enthusiasm that seemed to inspire all the players in the latter half of last season, and gave us hope for this, Bob is right in saying that the Slip End spirit is badly needed.

SUPPORTERS' SENTIMENTS.

There are features of club management known only to the directors, others known only to the players, some known only to directors and players, but there are times when it does not need a Solomon or a Solon to detect the discontent that mars the family circle, and such a period is afflicting the club now. If I were asked to express the views of a very large section of the supporters it would be something like this: "There is something behind the scenes about which we know nothing, and it is time the whole business was cleared up. Everybody seems to be more or less adversely affected; the players are not giving their best as they did at the beginning; and there is no team spirit. If something isn't done quickly the Club will tumble to the bottom of the League table quicker than it went up last season."

CARPHOLOGY.

It is utterly absurd for anyone to accuse the directors of not desiring promotion. To a man they want it just as much as any man on the terraces or in the enclosure. It is equally unthinkable that any player does not want to win. He does, and has a further incentive than the honour of playing with the first eleven. The whole trouble is that there seems to be a multitude of individual pettinesses that prevent men giving of their best, however keen their desires. During some periods of the game against Bristol Rovers there recurred the thought expressed at the head of this paragraph. Carphology is the name applied to the picking of bedclothes by a sick person in delirium, and its literal meaning is the gathering of straw. They play was as ineffective as that. There was the desire to succeed, but not much of the will to win, or, at any rate, not unity of will.

HAPPY START

We saw the quickest goal of the season fall to the Town while a considerable number of the supporters were finding their shillings at the turnstiles, and we thought it was a happy augury. Till lost the toss, and Panther kicked off. Woods tried to dribble, but sent the ball against an opponent's legs; Agnew seized and promptly sent out to Pointon. The winger sped away, managed to overcome Haydon after a brief hold-up, ran to the line, and then dropped the ball in front with perfect judgment. PANTHER was on the spot, and promptly headed into the net—an inspiring start in his first home match with the first team. The Rovers could have been excused had they lost their heads over this, but there was too much grey hair on their side for anything like that.

ON THE RUN.

The talent of Forbes saved them, I think. Coolly and cleverly he set his forwards going, and Harper had to handle three or four times, because the Town halves and backs did not appear to be sure of each other. Forbes looked after his left wing well; and from this flank the equaliser came. CLENNELL, who already had once shot, got another opening, and carefully aimed at the end farthest from Harper, and the goalkeeper was well beaten in spite of a sharp dive at full length through the mud. It was a fine goal, and made the Town defenders look serious. Fortunately, Graham and Till retrieved many errors by the halves, and if Richards were not as artistic as Forbes, his great height and

strength were invaluable in stemming danger.

NO MORE.

The scoring was finished. On the heavy ground the players controlled fairly well, but whereas the Town were disposed to over-dribble, the visitors kept the ball on the move, and both Douglas and Evans middled splendidly. Harper was lucky two or three times to get in the way of shots at close quarters, but these generally came from the wings, for Graham and Till tackled promptly and worried the inside men a lot. It was in the forward and middle line that the Town were failing. Clark never got a touch of the ball for a long time, and Pointon could not repeat that first fine centre. Woods and Agnew worked hard and Panther was always ready for a dash through, but got few good passes, though distributing impartially and nicely.

PENALTY APPEAL.

During one attack by the Town there was a loud appeal for a penalty kick, and the linesman's flag went up promptly as Haydon deliberately handled. He was well inside the area, but the referee, who, apparently, only allowed the appeal because of the linesman's signal, brought the ball to the edge of the area, and the free kick was unavailing against the vigilance of Whatley. Chances were missed at both ends, Clark once getting right under the ball when he had only Whatley to beat, and it went sailing to the top of the terraces. The Rovers made many strong attacks, and Harper was frequently tested, while headers by Culley and Forbes went just over the bar when better use of the pate would have put the Rovers ahead. On the whole the visitors had played the more attractive football when the interval came:—

LUTON TOWN 1 goal
BRISTOL ROVERS 1 ..

For a quarter of an hour in the second half the Rovers held their own, but the Town were getting more vim into their work, though still disposed to hold on too long, and slowness off the mark was very irritating to the crowd. Panther tried to bore through, but usually found one or two opponents arrive on the spot concurrently with himself, and they gave him no freedom. Woods and Agnew worked tremendously hard, and Black and Richards were doing ever so much better, the ball being sent chiefly to the right wing. Whatley made many grand saves; corners were forced time after time, but the Rovers' defenders stuck to their task grimly and robustly, and contested every yard of ground.

CLEVER CLENNELL.

Clennell was conspicuous for cleverly raising the assaults, and he and his old Cardiff City colleague, Evans, were often to the fore. Culley had to be shadowed very closely, and there were fine tussles between Till and Douglas. The latter showed a rare turn of speed and good control, but was too eager. Fortunately for the Town his partner was not equal to Clennell, or there would have been a more serious outlook for the Town defence. Harper had to save now and then, but Whatley had very difficult stuff. The Town inside men could not control the ball well, and the picking up of chances was not done quickly enough while passes were very inaccurate. Still they pegged away, and as the minutes ticked off the more energetic the work became, but it was all to no purpose, and the final whistle found the scores level.

"EXCUSES"!

Usually I am asked many times what excuses I have to make when there is failure to deliver the goods. If what I have already written is an "excuse," I can't better it. Everybody must agree, however, that the ground was in a terrible state, and in places the mud was ankle deep. The players stood the pace very well, and the slowness was deliberate rather than due to exhaustion, though all had enough of it before the end. Harper kept goal well, and had no chance with the shot that scored. Graham, after two or three minutes' uncertainty, played a grand game, being quick to resolve and execute, and getting the ball away well. Till tackled cleverly as ever, but was not so conspicuous as his partner. He had rather more than the fair share of work that Douglas required.

THE CHANGES.

Richards' appearance at centre-half was not an unqualified success. He had the advantage of appearing on a ground "made for him," but, more than his actual work, it was the spirit he brought into the game that justified him, as it always will while there is so little evidence of it in any of the rest. Often he was floundering in the mud when opponents were tripping past, but commanded a lot of respect, and his strength staved off many fierce onslaughts, while he also took a hand in attack. On a less favourable ground, however, he might not do so well. Black played as hard as ever. He was very clever at times, but the fatal policy of wandering from position made Clennell and Evans more dan-

(Continued in next column.)

(Continued from previous column.)

gerous than they should have been in the first half. In the second he was much more circumspect, and thus more useful. Millar had a tough handful in Douglas, and the winger, hugging the touch-line, all too often had an easy course. In offence Millar did good work though occasionally exasperating the crowd by his retention of the ball.

ATTACK.

This was ragged as a combination, though there was much good individual play, as there should be on a holding ground if a player has any notion of control. Panther was a bogey man to the Rovers' defenders, and was very pushful, but did not get the best support. What came was chiefly in spasms from Woods, but good passing was wanting. The centre-forward had few shots. He gave out nice passes to the wings, kept cool and picked out the best-placed colleague very well. He improves with use. Woods was not so good at inside right as on the other wing, but played as hard as ever, and gave Pointon a lot of work that did not come to fruition. The winger did not improve by the change of partner, and is not fulfilling early promise. Agnew again played well, the ground fitting him. He was most industrious, but could have given Clark more work, and was not more fortunate than usual in front of goal. Clark played better in the second half than in the first, and put over a few nice centres.

ROVERS.

The Rovers surprised most people by their style in the first half, but it was practically all due to Forbes. He did not stay the game well, but for over an hour played with fine perception, especially in attack, and his footwork generally was unsurpassed. Whatley was a splendid goalkeeper, and Haydon a sound back, though little better than Bennett. The flank halves were not much more than worriers. Douglas, Clennell and Evans all played finely in attack.

There were 7,000 spectators.