

NEWPORT'S MASTERS.

LUTON TOWN MAINTAIN THEIR FORM

Praise for Forwards.

(By "CRUSADER.")

LUTON TOWN 4
NEWPORT COUNTY 1

LUTON. Harper; Graham, Richards; Black, Rennie, Millar; Pointon, Reid, Thompson, Woods, Clark.

NEWPORT. Maidment; Anderson, Hinton; Nairn, Pritchard, Bowsher; Johnson, Gittens, James, Drinnan, Hiles.

Referee. J. H. Collins, Birmingham.

So the Town have won another game at last. Christmas Day to March 5th is a long wait, and hundreds of supporters were losing interest. Allowing for a good deal of misfortune, there is no doubt that they should have won several games since they contrived to give Millwall Athletic the biggest hiding they have had for years. I am not going to analyse the games, because I do not want to say a word that can be misconstrued into carping criticism, but those who saw this defeat of Newport County will acknowledge that the policy of playing Thompson at centre-forward has been fully justified. In the previous three matches in which he took part in that position—Merthyr, Norwich and Charlton—he proved his worth. There was a freshness, stamina and skill about the attack that made all the difference, and we may well hope this is but the beginning of a long run of success.

NEWPORT STYLISH.

Considering the awful state of the ground and the heavy rain that met the players when they lined up, it was a spanking fight. The elements must have tried tempers sorely, but there were only two or three minor incidents of ill-feeling, and for the most part the players kept their tempers better than they kept their feet. The contest was cleaner than the costumes. There was a good, hard slog for upwards of an hour, but following the quick goals scored by the Town in the second half there was a disposition to take things easily, and that was one of the reasons the victory was not more pronounced, and why we did not keep a clean sheet. There were dramatic moments, and no long periods of dullness, but the ascendancy of the Town was well defined in the second half, and their display then earned the honours.

BETTER FINISH.

The slight pull the Town had in the first half was due to extra nip in the danger zone, though the inside forwards were slow on several occasions. They did not shoot with the vigour as in the two previous games, because conditions were against that, but did well enough to make supporters happy and the Newport goalkeeper uncomfortable. Many thrills had come in the vicinity of the Newport goal, before there was a score. Newport, actually got the ball in the net first, but the whistle had already signified an infringement, James bringing the ball down with his hand close in goal. Still, the visitors held their own very well, and Harper had several good shots to deal with. In this period I liked the witful work of Pritchard, the Newport centre-half, for he was responsible for much of the attacking by his side. All their middle men were doing well, however, and but for the tendency of the inside forwards to do too much dodging instead of shooting, it is quite on the cards that Harper would have been beaten.

CHANCES MISSED.

Better chances were missed at the other end, however, for as the game wore on the Town forwards played better and better. Pointon's bright work came in patches, but he was not getting as much business as he deserved. Reid often forgetting his partner, who relied on slings from Rennie. There were three or four sparkling runs by the right winger that deserved goals, and both Woods and Thompson missed comfortable chances from perfect centres, while Pointon himself should have scored from a swinging pass across goal by Rennie. Clark was doing better than ever, and though Anderson held him well in the early stages, his outeness brought the opening goal. There had been a puzzling exchange of passes in which Rennie and Millar shone, and then the ball was placed to Clark. Foiled in midfield by the obstruction of a couple of opponents, he sent the ball nicely forward for Thompson to take in his stride well out on the left. The centre-forward drew the opposition and then middled to REID, right in front of goal, and Maidment was given no chance.

Luton had the better of the play to the interval, though Newport made many raids, especially through Johnson, who was very active, and centred finely.

LUTON 1
NEWPORT 0

After an early skirmish by the visiting right wing when the game was resumed under much improved conditions, Clark was sent away. His centre was too high for the inside men, and appeared to be going out of play, but Pointon's pace enabled him to gather it close to the line. He was too well covered to take a shot, but skilfully turned the ball back to REID, who scored with a beautiful drive, the ball going like a bullet right away from Maidment, just about a foot from the net. Newport seemed to lose heart a little after this, and were gradually worn down. Anderson put in all he knew, and once came through from the goal-mouth, dribbling cleverly beyond the middle line

to set his forwards going, but Harper was not troubled, and the strong kicking of Graham and Richards kept the ball in the Newport half most of the time.

FINE FORWARD PLAY.

The Town forwards got better and better, the shooting pleasing the crowd immensely, and Maidment made fine saves. There were several corners, and from one of these, placed by Clark, the next goal came after a long period of pressure. As a result of this flag kick, several times the Newport goal was within an ace of falling, but escaped until WOODS received from Reid, and fired in a straight, low shot, almost on the ground, and though Maidment dived and managed to touch the ball, he could not prevent it entering the net. Straightway from the centre the ball came out to the visiting right, but Millar intercepted, and sent to Woods. The latter and Thompson enlisted the services of Clark, and away the trio went. Clark got right through and tapped the ball into the middle; THOMPSON, though hedged in, managed to get his right foot to the ball and shoot into the net right away from Maidment for a capital goal.

AS USUAL.

There had been indications after the second goal that the Town halves were disposed to take liberties with the Newport team by too much dribbling, and, as usual, this eventually led to the concession of a goal. Before that came, however, the Town attacked fiercely, and Maidment brought off splendid saves, all the inside forwards shooting well. Looseness by Rennie, Black, and, to some extent, Graham, led to the fall of the Town goal. Drinnan sent Hiles a pass; the winger made a delightful run, beating all opposition, and finally middling the ball with Harper out of place. Millar made a big effort to reach it, but JOHN-SON was too quick, and got there to touch the ball into the net. Luton at once replied spiritedly, and Reid crashed a glorious shot against the upright, the ball coming out. Thompson twice came close after strong solo efforts, and the Newport goal had narrow escapes.

ON THE MARK.

Everybody to whom I spoke after the game remarked upon the fine forward work of the Town, with special emphasis on the improved shooting. The leadership of Thompson was again a feature. He opened out the game with judgment, hustled the defence, and shot with great power. Reid was slow in midfield at times, but is justifying the opinion that he can play inside wing, and his readiness to shoot was pleasing. Now and then he gave Pointon a splendid pass, and, as with his shooting, I hope he will continue to feed the winger, who has not merely pace, but no little skill in beating an opponent. Woods was the quiet and thoughtful force, and played better than at Charlton. Either in playing Thompson or Clark with the correct pass, he was dangerous, and the winger put up a very fine game. He got into it more than usual, and his centres brought a lot of trouble.

MIDDLE MEN.

The only complaint one can have against the middle men is their continued tendency to slacken when there is a decisive lead. All three played well. Rennie seems to be improving in headwork; his long slanting passes to the extreme wingers were almost models of accuracy, and when he has cultivated the push through the middle with equal precision he will more nearly fill the bill as a first-class pivot. Black was clever in control, keeping the ball on the ground, and, though he had a hot wing to face, more than held his own. Millar's interception, due to his nice positioning, and his co-operation with the left wing, were useful in defensive work and attack. When he was in possession there was nearly always an attack, for he had good understanding with Woods and Clark when it came to parting with the ball.

REARGUARD.

Harper had several awkward shots to stop in the first half, but was rarely engaged in the second; two shots proved his agility and fielding skill, one save under the bar being very fine. Graham and Richards made a fine pair of backs. The former was not so conspicuous as his partner, perhaps, for Richards liked the prospects of a rush. Both kicked with great power, and tackled strongly, and generally found their forwards.

NEWPORT.

Maidment is a capable custodian. He had no chance with the shots that scored, and brought off many fine saves. Anderson was the better of two useful backs. He covered a lot of ground, and at one period in the second half his activities saved the "Ironsides" from rout. Hinton was not in the picture so prominently, but played pluckily. The halves played polished football in the first half, but fell away in the second. I like Pritchard. He is a young player who will make a name, for he has all the attributes that go towards making a great pivot. The wing men were the most dangerous forwards, though the inside men were tricky and their passing much admired. As with Luton until recently, however, they overdid the close work when a shot might have been delivered with telling effect. There were 5,000 spectators.