

WELL PLAYED!

LUTON'S FINE FORWARD PLAY BEATS NEWPORT.

The Long - Wanted Win.

By Crusader.

Not a few supporters of Luton Town were disposed to think that the views expressed in these columns after the games at Norwich and Charlton were exaggerated—until last Saturday's game with Newport. Then they were all saying the same thing.

"Why haven't they played like this all the season?" I have been asked time after time, and I can only retort, "Ask me another."

Newport's goal average does not make their position, and it is extraordinary that a club should be sixth on the table with a goal average showing five in arrears. At the moment they have a lead of six points of the Town, and a game in hand, but if the Town continue to show the quality of the last three games I think that leeway will be made up.

There could be no gainsaying the fact that the Town were full value for their victory. True, they were some time before they got into their stride, and Newport gave them a gallant fight in the first half. In many games the superiority of the Town has been discovered in defence, or a better way of putting it would be to ascribe the inability to succeed to the poor finishing of the forwards after good work all round. The last three games have shown a quite wonderful change in this respect, and the forwards are entitled to a volume of praise for three splendid games—two away from home.

BETTER MARKSMANSHIP.

With the exception of the game against Millwall on Christmas Day, they have never scored more than three goals in a match this season, but the four goals of Saturday's encounter might have been doubled, with a little better fortune for the inside men. As for weeks past, I will continue to insist upon the desirability of shooting practice, for I see no other improvement to account for the success. Match after match has been spoiled from the Town's point of view by the failure of the forwards to shoot on sight, and with this fault eradicated one may well look forward to a better record in the last nine weeks of the season.

The conditions when the teams turned out were dreadful. Rain was falling, and increasing in density, the sky was black with it; the ground had been rolled, but, obviously, was holding a lot of water. When Graham took advantage of the conditions it seemed likely that Newport would undergo a gruelling time, but it was not until the rain had ceased and the wind dropped that they were the inferior side. In the first half they played really good football, and menaced the Town goal often, the halves opening out the game and the forwards moving with speed and intelligence. More than once the cleverness of the inside forwards proved their own undoing, for they would retain the ball after drawing the opposition, with the result that Graham and Richards were able to bar the way, and the Town halves could recover.

OPEN WORK.

All the time, however, the Town forwards were moving with good speed, and their open play squared accounts, and rendered the work of the home defence much more difficult than that of the Town rearguard. Though all the line played well, the most dangerous unit was Pointon, and goals should have come from his centres quite easily, but chances were spoilt because the forwards were not able to get their feet out of the mud quickly enough.

When the goal came it was from a brilliant bout of half-back play by Rennie and Millar, and eventually the ball was passed to the left wing. Clark put the ball forward for Thompson to dash ahead, and return it

in front, and REID had a simple task to score. Maidment had no chance with this, but had made many capital saves earlier on. At half-time the score showed:—

LUTON	1
NEWPORT	0

Newport's defeat might be timed from the second goal, which came two minutes after the re-start. Thompson sent Clark away, and the winger centred too far for the inside men. Pointon got the ball by a quick sprint, and his perfect back pass to REID enabled the latter to fire into the net—a grand shot.

Newport strove valiantly, but their halves had lost a grip on the game, and more and more the burden fell on the backs and Maidment. All three defended heroically, and Anderson was splendid in his judgment. There was a powerful penetration about the home attack, however, and with the halves backing them cleverly, they gave the County defence a stiff load. Too stiff, it turned out, for after a scrimmage consequent upon a flag-kick, WOODS scored a fine goal.

Before the cheers had died away the Town left flank and Thompson made the Newport defence a hopeless mess, and Clark tipped the ball in front for THOMPSON to get a well-earned goal.

ON TOP.

Luton continued to hold the upper hand, but the County never ceased trying, and Harper and his backs had to be constantly alert. Only a few shots were put in, but Harper made good saves from Hiles and Drinnan, and James twice fired over the bar. The Town halves dropped some of their energy as the end came 'n sight, with the result that Hiles carried past several defenders and slipped the ball in front for JOHNSON to score.

The Town might well have squared their goal average in the next seven or eight minutes. A magnificent shot by Reid banged the upright with Maidment well beaten, and Thompson had very hard luck with good efforts. Newport made one or two strong advances, but the Town backs were too good, and the end came with a fine and well-deserved victory.

THE TEAMS.

Harper had comparatively little to do, but twice saved cleverly in the second half. Graham and Richards gave little away, and played sound, aggressive football. The latter's strength was a notable factor, and his kicking of the heavy ball of great value. All the middle men did splendid service, though Black was not quite so prominent as usual. The forwards were always threatening danger, and the line, on the present form, is the best in the club. Woods' cunning has meant a lot to Clark, and Thompson's enthusiasm and energy infects the quintette. Reid is settled with Pointon, and it will be a great pity if the attack is subject to interference.

For the visitors Maidment kept goal like a class custodian, and Anderson put up a capital game at back, being quicker and more judicious than Hinton. The halves played clever football in the first half, Pritchard especially, but fell away in the second. Skilful forward work won admiration, but the wings, who were the more dangerous factors, were not employed enough.

There were 5,000 spectators.

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.