

LUTON TOWN'S THIRD SUCCESS AWAY.

ABERDARE BEATEN BY THE ONLY GOAL.

Confidence and Team Spirit.

By Crusader.

ABERDARE ATHLETIC 0

LUTON TOWN 1

ABERDARE. — Len. Evans; Brown, Brophy; Beevor, Bell, Nicoll; Sheldon. B. Evans, Williams, Jones, Callaghan.

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

Referee: A. J. Attwood, Newport.

FAILURE is very much like scandal—there is no vision of the end. Just as one hasty word or unfortunate action may lead to the crucifixion of a community, so one rash kick or unlucky deed may annihilate a career that promises promotion and honours.

Luton Town's first failure of the season was at Southend, and although there was some sign of recovery now and then, there was never any real arrest, and now, too late, the club would appear to be recovering. The last four games have produced better football from the Town than any other series—even those early displays did not show to the same extent the skill of the team.

First, however, let me deal with the manner in which the result at Aberdare was incorrectly spread.

When the game was over I made my way down to the telephone boxes under the stand to give the last message to Luton. Imagine my surprise when I discovered that the result had been broadcast already as "No score." The game concluded at 5.41, and at 5.45 I was speaking to a colleague in the Luton office. When I told him that the score was a goal to nil for Luton, he replied that from London they had already received the result as a blank draw.

The mischief occurred through the gentleman who telephoned my report to Luton. He was on the line when the goal was scored, and as there was no outburst of applause to announce the goal, he knew nothing about it until he got hold of the last part of the report, and I told him to announce the result and the name of the scorer first. He received the news in blank dismay, for he had informed another reporter also engaged in the telephone room, and between them they had sent out the news without the all-important factor. I did my best to reassure them by saying that the people who counted most were those at Luton, but that was small comfort.

CONFIDENCE.

It was the most matter-of-fact win I have known for Luton. That may be a curious expression, but it hits the situation. When Thompson met the party at Paddington on Friday night he observed quite casually that it was not much good going to Aberdare unless they were going to win, and that spirit infected the whole party. It was evident in the way they opened, and though there were two or three occasions when the home team might have scored, they certainly did not look like winning. Moreover, had the verdict been by two goals clear it would have been no more than the Town deserved, for I thought they were wrongly deprived of a good goal scored by Thompson in the first half. There were times when the clamour of the crowd seemed to have more effect on the referee than on the linesmen—an unusual thing in Wales—especially towards the end of the game, and though Mr. Attwood might smile at the suggestion, some of the Town players felt as I did.

The Town were the better side, and deserved their win in a hard, cleanly fought game. There were free kicks, but usually for mild offences, and the players kept their heads well. The advantage of the Town chiefly lay in the fact that they were rather faster and stronger than the opposition, and when they opened out the game they had the home halves and backs on the run. Better still, perhaps, they played with great confidence and fine team spirit.

For the greater part of the first half the Town did much more pressing, and the combination was really delightful at times, but the vigilance of Police-constable Evans and his backs made goal-scoring difficult, and the custodian brought off one brilliant save when a header from Thompson seemed certain to find the net.

The ground was very spongy, however, and to use a cricket term; sometimes the ball came so slowly off the pitch that the inside forwards played too soon; at others it nipped up quickly and baulked attempts to trap it. The spot on which it dropped was the reason for this puzzling behaviour, and as it was also a light ball, its tendency to play tricks spoilt much good work. In spite of this, however, the combination among the Town forwards and halves evoked much admiration; they were the more workmanlike side, and the work was fairly distributed.

MANY FLAG KICKS.

The Town forced a lot of flag kicks, and it seemed to be only a matter of time before they scored. As often happens, however, a sudden raid by the apparently weaker side all but succeeded. Harper had only one ticklish shot, but the home forwards came hot-foot and the ball slipped from his grasp. It was rushed away after good shoulder work by Richards and Millar, and then Pointon dribbled from the touch-line into the middle and passed to Reid, but the latter was offside as he shot into the net. The

skill of Callaghan in attack and of Brown in defence gave the Town most trouble, but the inside men got few chances to shoot. Then the Town team made a strong attack, in which practically every player took part, and Thompson upset Brophy and netted with a lightning drive. Why the referee disallowed this goal I do not know, and the Town players were inclined to be cross about it. The home team celebrated the escape by a sustained attack, and from a grand effort by Sheldon both Williams and Jones had a rare opportunity of converting, but sent past. The Town forwards and halves were shooting hard and often, but could not beat Evans, and many shots were too wide or too high. The interval came:

ABERDARE nil
LUTON nil

Aberdare had rather the better of the exchanges for twenty minutes of the second half, though the Town made frequent attacks. There was a tendency to hold the ball too long, however, whereas the home side were giving it more boot than in the first half, and this enterprise was the more profitable. Still, Harper was never in real difficulty, the stalwart defence of Graham and Richards keeping the home side from shooting opportunity at close quarters.

Some of the Town players seemed to be going along in a perfunctory fashion at times, but now and then the ball was swung out to the wings and then muddled dangerously, and Evans and his backs always had to be watched. The middle of this half had been reached when the Town began to assert superiority. There was fast and clever work all along the attacking line, and all the forwards went close with shots, while once, following a fine centre by Clark, Thompson blocked the ball right on the line, and how it was scrambled away by Brophy and Nicol was a mystery. There was some sting in the attack, however, and Aberdare were not beaten yet, and by good use of their wing men, especially Callaghan, they made spirited attacks, and there was need of resolute defence.

THE GOAL.

There was a period of eight minutes before the final whistle when the Town got the decisive goal of the match. The ball moved all across the field in the mode of attack, and finally Woods drew the defence and pushed the ball forward for THOMPSON to rush between the backs and drive it low down into the net right away from the home goalkeeper.

The remainder of the game found both sides putting in stronger work than before. Aberdare got a couple of free kicks just outside the penalty line, but could not make any impression on the Town defence, and at the other end Thompson and Clark each went close.

It was the Town's third victory away from home, and though their play as a side did not reach the quality of the exhibitions in the three games previous, they deserved all they got. They seemed almost too sanguine of success, and occasionally seemed content to amble placidly along. Aberdare were clever forward and in the rearguard, but not so strong in the middle line.

Harper never had a difficult shot to stop, though there was once a misunderstanding between him and Graham, and it might have ended disastrously.

The Town backs again played strongly, and the stature and strength of Richards was of great value when the home forwards were inclined to try rushing tactics. Both kicked a good length, and were relentless in tackling forwards who showed no small skill in dribbling.

The halves were exceedingly clever when they chose, but there were periods when they were almost cheekily indolent. There was not much to choose among them, but the best part of their work was in the following up of the attack. The long passing was not so good as it might have been, but in the co-operative work between the flank halves and their wing men it was neat, and often as precise as could be desired. All of them did well, and the best corroboration of the soundness of the whole defence may be in the fact that in their previous seven games Aberdare had scored sixteen goals.

In attack Thompson was once more a great asset. His distribution was skilfully executed, and he was always eager for a shot, while his tussles with the backs worried them tremendously. Woods was clever in his drawing of opponents, and his nice work in conjunction with Clark and Millar brought many attacks. The winger showed a good turn of speed, and I don't think he ever put a ball behind. Pointon again did not have so much work as he might have had, and he did not take as much out of himself as usual, but got his centres nicely in front, and once went very close to

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scoring. Reid was inclined to hold on too long, perhaps, but played a useful game, and as Woods was not too big to fall back and help his halves.

Aberdare have a fine goalkeeper in Evans, and Brown was a dashing right back. The halves were moderate, but the forwards often showed cleverness, the wingers especially, and Callaghan has the making of a great winger. He was easily the pick of the forward line.

There were only about 2,000 spectators at the beginning, but by the interval the number had increased to something like 3,000.