

THE THIRD BLOW.

LUTON OUT-PACED AND OUT-GENERALLED.

Weakness That Must be Remedied.

(By CRUSADER).

BRIGHTON & HOVE ALBION 5 Goals
LUTON TOWN 2 ..
LUTON.—Abbott; Graham, Till; Black, Rennie, Millar; Pointon, Reid (8), Panther, Banks, Davies.
BRIGHTON.—Williams; Smith, Curran; Wilkinson, Mooney, Little; Simpson, Jennings, Cook, Hopkins, Wilson.
Referee: Mr. T. W. Chamberlain, Forest Gate.

Serious disorders require serious treatment, and that is the attitude Luton Town directors will have to adopt in regard to their first eleven. It is possible they have already attempted remedy by drastic methods, for this is written long before the journey to Norwich. I do not know when there has been such unanimity among the supporters as to the cause of failure, but it was so obvious that they could not miss it. The trouble lay in the vitals of the team, and the directors will have to take immediate and stringent measures to restore health. Luton are not the only club awaiting the first point—even the champions of the First Division, the record breakers, have yet to capture a point—but there must be radical alterations before they get a look-in. At the moment they are at the bottom of their table, and the programme is so framed that there seems little hope of a rise just yet.

NO PANIC.

It is not a bit of use getting panic-stricken because these first three games have been lost. We must remember that a few months ago players who have so far failed to find their form were achieving success. That does not mean that they are entitled to hold their places without regard to results, but, after all, there have been only three games, and so the directors have some little excuse for the unfortunate line things have taken. At Southend everybody agreed that the Town were unfortunate; against Norwich they were also sufferers; but against Brighton on Saturday they were well beaten by a superior side. After seeing the Albion—well, something unusual will have to occur if Luton are to do anything like as well as last season.

The contributory causes to the defeat being so emphatic, were to the discredit of the Town players, and I am bound to say that the referee was far more lenient than any official I have seen for a long time. There was open fouling, if not dangerous, at least painful, and it arose not through the offensive methods of the Albion, but simply because Town players got peeved over the penalty kick that did not yield a goal. It riled the spectators as much as the Albion players, one or two of whom were to be commended for the calmness they showed in most provoking circumstances. It was so glaring that the Town directors themselves will probably take action to guard against a repetition.

In my opinion there would not have been nearly so big a margin between the scores at the end had players continued to do their best, and the Albion players, judging by their actions, thought the same. It may be that one of the Albion players, or perhaps two, did not play as cleanly as they might, but the delinquencies of one or two players is no excuse for such indiscriminate fouling as was resorted to late in the game. It is no pleasure to write in such a strain, and it is a rare occurrence to feel the necessity, but it was so palpable that it cannot be overlooked.

A FLYING START.

The Town got a flying start, though the incident that led to the first goal within three minutes of the game being started, was not exactly free from accident. Curran failed to get the ball past the long legs of Pointon, and the ball rebounded. **PANTHER** was on it like a flash, and had shot almost before any Albion defender or any supporter had realised it, and the ball was in the net for a lovely goal. It appeared then as if the Town were early laying the foundation for a substantial victory. Alas! Just as Curran had not been blameless, neither was Graham at the other end. He weakly headed the ball down to the feet of **COOK**, who is too good a player to fail in acceptance of such gifts, and Abbott was beaten for the equaliser.

The crowd had not got over this misfortune when **SIMPSON** took upon himself the hazard of a solo effort, and finished up by shooting hard past Abbott. In this case the Town were distinctly unfortunate, for the linesman had "flagged" Simpson offside; and had he been an official of reasonable experience, he would have persisted in his objection, but he

calmly lowered his flag and the goal was counted.

TWICE LEVEL.

Even that did not disturb the Town unduly, and though there was always more danger in the well-timed movements and the understanding displayed by the Albion, the home team kept pegging away, and **BANKS** eventually levelled the scores with a header following a rush on the right. Play continued even until the interval, at which time none of us dreamed of the ignominious spectacle that would transpire in the second period.

LUTON TOWN 2 Goals
BRIGHTON & HOVE ALBION 2 ..

In the first stages of the re-opening there was nothing to call for a thrill, and Luton had rather the better of the exchanges until the visitors got going again. They then took the Town defence by storm. Graham was hopelessly beaten by the left wing, and a corner was conceded. This was so well placed by Wilson that Abbott was grateful to see the ball rise over the bar after he had touched it with the tips of his fingers. The second flag-kick was from Simpson, and the ball was headed out. It went to **MOONEY**, who met it fairly and squarely with his forehead, and the ball travelled at a great pace, hit the underside of the bar, and was in the net in a flash.

COWED AND BEATEN.

The Town were not improving a little bit, whereas Brighton seemed to move faster and more methodically as the game grew older. A rush by the Town forwards found the Albion defenders a bit mixed, and Smith was adjudged to have handled. Till came up the field and took the kick himself, but shot so tamely that Williams saved with ease. From that moment the Town were a cowed and beaten lot. Graham tried hard to alter the outlook, and made several dashes, but usually went too far, with the result that he was not at home when wanted. The space in front of the Town goal was left wide open by the defenders, with the result that a movement by the visitors' right wing presented **HOPKINS** with a walk through the gap, and he scored easily. Soon afterwards, **MOONEY**, the centre-half, actually had a like opening, and he went through it and beat the unhappy Abbott once more.

Then Jennings crashed home a fine shot, and he was unfortunate to have the point disallowed owing to Hopkins being offside. This he undoubtedly was, but he did not interfere with the player unless his nearness distracted Abbott, and that is a far-fetched reasoning. Apart from the Town rearguard, Millar, Panther and Banks, the Town seemed unable to realise their job, and every Luton supporter was glad when the referee brought the dismal show to a close.

MIDDLE LINE WEAKNESS.

After the above, little remains to be said. Abbott seemed to me to have no chance with the scoring shots, though other people thought differently. He made one or two good saves, but was badly protected. The backs could not by any means be saddled with the blame.

The weakness lay in the middle. Not one of the trio played up to his best at any period of the game. The attempts to stop the visiting forwards were half-hearted, lacked grit and judgment, and Graham and Till were in demand more often than they should have been. Worse still, the forwards never seemed to get a single pass along the turf, and even those in the air were badly directed. Millar was a plodder, but could never keep Simpson in check. Black overdid the attacking, with the result that his wing in opposition had some unhindered forays, and Rennie has seldom played so badly. This is the weakness that must be remedied, or there will be worse experiences than that of Saturday. I do not remember a game last season when the halves were so poor as on this occasion, and the sooner they get back to their average of last year, the better for the club.

OUTPACED AND OUTGENERALLED.

It seems almost unfair to say anything about the forwards when they failed to get adequate support. All eyes were on Banks, and he showed great possibilities. Time after time he tried to bring some life into the attack, and now and then succeeded, and it was very encouraging for him to get a goal in his first match for the club. He will do even better. Davies and Banks played nice football when they could get the ball, and the latter also fed Panther well. Panther was as active as ever, full of beans and grit, and frequently played a lone hand against three or four men all bigger than himself. Reid was completely off colour. It is not often he loses himself to such an extent. He did not appear capable of doing anything right. Pointon therefore had a bad afternoon. Sometimes he managed to skip through, but not often, and he was not well nursed. Davies began well, but was affected by the general lethargy. And against the rails, Horace Pakes, the trainer, had the mortification of seeing his men outpaced and outgeneralled.

Brighton had a grand middle line, Mooney being particularly good, but the backs were very uncertain. The attack played fine fast football throughout, and were not only judicious in positioning, but shot well.

There were 9,000 spectators.

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