

LUTON LOSE AGAIN.

"LIONS" VICTORIOUS AT THE DEN.

(By CRUSADER.)

IF LUTON TOWN can maintain the style and spirit of their first half display at the Den, there will be no danger of relegation at the end of the season. MILLWALL'S resources are such that they can always turn out a big, workmanlike side, even when supposed to be below full strength. This was proved on Saturday, but for the first half Luton were the more likely side so far as scientific football was concerned. In a clash of brawn the "Lions" were superior, and but for their advantage in this respect Luton would have had a good deal the better of the game. As it was the vigorous exchanges drained the Town team of their strength and stamina, with the inevitable result that the "Lions" were masters in the second period.

FAIR RESULT.

If it had been a game in which charging were taboo, Luton might well have won, but physical strength is not only permitted, but is necessary, and just as I was criticised in the abuse of their advantage in this respect last season, so I would pay tribute that they did not offend any more than the Town players in the game at the Den. It was a really interesting and hard-fought battle, and the spoils rightly went to the swift and the strong on the full run of the game. Luton just deserved their first half lead, because at the proper time they took their chances, and there were aspects of the play that showed up the "Lions" very unfavourably. There was a change after the "breather," and the steady, insistent pressure of the "Lions" met with nothing more than its due reward. The score, indeed, is a fair indication of the respective merits of the teams taking the game as a whole.

NO RESERVE ENERGY

One may say that without detracting from the praise earned by the Town. It was no mean performance to run a side like Millwall to a goal, and with the memory of last season's hectic experience still in mind, the pluck of the side in the first half was admirable. It was after the change that they lost their virility, their snap, and, with one or two exceptions, they were unable to cope with the fierce rushes of the home attack, which was backed by a middle line in deadly earnest, with any amount of muscle, no lack of courage, and a good deal of skill. In this unhappy time the Town players were usually a shade slower in pace, and had no reserve energy to draw upon in countering the opposition.

THE EXPERIMENT.

I do not hold that the mere fact of Rennie and Harkins each getting a goal completely justified the experiment. The broader view is mine—that of introducing more weight, height and dash. It was this that enabled the Town to take the substantial lead of two goals in twenty-five minutes. The defence had stood up manfully against the bustling thrusts of the home forwards, and then came an open movement, in which the ball was swung from right to left. Nunn mystified the opposition, and slipped the ball across for RENNIE to meet the ball on the run. Without any attempt to place or dribble, the centre-forward shot first time, and the goal was as good as any we have seen this season. The second was the outcome of a well-placed free kick by Pointon, who had been fouled by Amos. HARKINS coolly met the centre, and headed past Harford—a neat point.

"LIONS" FIRST

There were other narrow escapes for the Millwall goal before half-time. Yardley once dribbled cleverly and shot magnificently, but Harford saved brilliantly by touching the ball out for a corner-kick. The "Lions" replied with fierce bursts in which their wingers were clever, and the inside forwards full of dash and fire. Muir made some wonderful saves, while Kingham and Graham put up a valiant

defence, and Fulton did splendid work. Nevertheless, a corner was obtained by Lincoln heavily charging Graham when the latter challenged, and from the resultant flag kick HAWKINS was able to reduce the deficit shooting through a rack of players. There was plenty of hustle in the subsequent play, but the Town were in front at the interval.

LUTON
MILLWALL

2
1

We had not long to wait in the second half before finding that the Town had lost much of their sting, and the "Lions" recognised it, too, for they piled on the attack, bustling harder than ever, and swinging the ball about much better than hitherto. One or two skirmishes by the Town forwards were beaten off with difficulty by the home defenders, but there was far more strenuous work at the other end, and Muir and his backs were severely tested. Kingham played grandly, and Graham also was a fighter, but the middle men could not hold the home forwards so well. Consequently it came as no very great surprise when LANDELLS got the equaliser with a beautiful ground shot that beat Muir all the way.

FLUKEY GOAL.

The encouragement served to further invigorate the "Lions," and though the Town rearguard never gave in, the goal was often in danger. The winning goal came, however, and was deserved, though the "Lions" were a trifle lucky in scoring so fluently. A raid on the home right found Hawkins well-placed for a centre, and the ball came into the middle. Kingham and LANDELLS went for it, heads up together, and the forward got it first. Muir waited for the ball to come to him, and seemed certain of it, but it twisted sharply, and passed into the net.

AN IMPROVEMENT.

The Town played better afterwards, but the home backs and halves gave nothing away, and never took risks. The ball was banged into safety whenever the Town threatened. Harford had anxious moments, and once was lucky to be able to get the ball away for a corner after failing to hold a shot from Rennie. The goal was well protected, however, and Hill was a tower of strength. There was never quite the same thrust about the Town attack, however, and the end came with the home side successful.

THE DEFENCE.

It was an interesting match, and though the Town were not well together as a general rule, their play was better than at Watford. Muir, apart from the third goal, did everything that could be expected, and Kingham was a splendid back, with Graham not far behind in point of merit. The halves were better in the first half than later, but Fraser did well all through. Fulton was a fine worker before the change of ends, but both he and Black seemed to lose stamina after change of ends.

FORWARDS.

Rennie was not an ideal leader, and that could not be expected, but he kept the ball moving, gave some nice passes, and his goal was a gem. Harkins was very slow, but, all things considered, kept position well, and was right on the spot when he got a chance to score. Pointon was patchy. In the first half he did clever things, but later faded away. Nunn was the star artiste, and probably the best forward on view, though he got all too few chances to show his skill. The team as a whole wants quickening up, slowness in the getaway being marked in comparison with the opposition, and there is need of sterner resistance for ninety minutes of the game.

Millwall were best served by Hill, Bryant, Chance, Landells and Black.

There were about 2,000 spectators.

MILLWALL ATHLETIC 3

LUTON TOWN 2

MILLWALL. — Harford; Tilling, Hill; Noble, Bryant, Amos; Chance, Hawkins, Landells, Lincoln, Black.

LUTON. — Muir; Kingham, Graham; Black, Fulton, Fraser; Pointon, Yardley, Rennie, Harkins, Nunn.

Referee.—Mr. C. D. Moon, Bristol.