

ROVERS' RESISTANCE.

STUBBORN GAME, BUT LUTON'S SUCCESS CONTINUED.

Woods' Great Goal.

(By CRUSADER).

LUTON TOWN 2 goals
BRISTOL ROVERS Nil
LUTON.—Abbott; Kingham, Graham;
Black, Bennie, Fraser; Pointon, Yardley,
Reid (8.), Woods, Dennis.

BRISTOL ROVERS.—Whatley; Bennett,
Haydon; Rotherham, Perry, Roberts;
Douglas, Williams, Culley, Whatmore,
Evans.

Referee.—Mr. A. J. Attwood, Newport,
Mon.

Only a very close observer would have given LUTON TOWN credit for superiority on the first-half display in this game. The fact that BRISTOL ROVERS gave Abbott a little more work than was given to Whatley led to the impression that they were having the better of the game, but, while there was little in it, I would have given the palm to the Town because they were playing the more scientific football. They were keeping position better, and frequently the Rovers invoked the aid of their forwards in defence, whereas the Town's attackers were seldom required to work outside their natural role. Moreover, and this is one of the best signs, and a very telling reason for recent effectiveness, they positioned cleverly, and but for the hard travelling conditions I am sure they would have upset the Rovers' defence as easily as they did that of Norwich, Merthyr, Clapton and Gillingham.

CAREFUL PLAY.

The slippery and cobbly ground spoilt many clever ideas on both sides, but the Town suffered the more in this respect, since they were striving to keep the ball on the ground, whereas the Rovers were kicking hard and high, in the hope that one of the forwards would be able to rush the defence. There were enough essays of this kind to encourage the backs and halves to keep up this style of play, but more scientific methods prevailed after the change of ends, and when the Town forwards forced the pace they were always a bit better than the opposition. It seemed clear in the first half that the Town players were not taking anything like the amount of risk the Rovers were prepared to take, and they "pulled out" none too soon in the second moiety. Possibly the referee's embargo upon fair charges made the Town players extra cautious, but it was a wise precaution, as the ground was very hard indeed, and a rough charge might have meant serious damage.

ALMOST A NEW EXPERIENCE.

Half-time without a goal was almost a new experience for us, but there had been little to deserve a goal. I thought that Reid was unfairly hustled off once in the first half, and there was a loud cry for a penalty kick, but it fell on deaf ears. The Town forwards seldom attempted a shot from decent range; apparently they wanted to walk the ball through. On the contrary, the Rovers let drive when within measurable distance. Had the ground been soft I do not think Reid would have been penalised when he upset Bennett and walked the ball in, but justice was done, because the Rovers' heavy charges incurred like decisions. On another occasion there was a loud appeal for "hands" against one of the Rovers' defenders, but I doubt if he knew how the ball was coming. Towards the end of the half Reid was well through when Haydon pushed him off as the centre forward was on the point of shooting from four or five yards' range. Most of us thought there should have been a penalty award in this instance, but the referee thought otherwise.

COMPACT DEFENCE.

The Rovers made good use of their left wing in the first half, and Evans responded finely. He showed fine control, and his centres were always dangerous, but there was a compactness about the Town defence that was very satisfactory. Williams was another lively factor in the Rovers' attack, his skilful passing leading to many advances. Douglas did not get much work, but he made the most thrilling individual effort of the half. He managed to get in front of Graham in a race, and wound up with a great shot that would have found the net but for a grand save by Abbott, who tipped the ball over the bar. So the interval came without score.

MORE TEST.

There was nothing in the early stages of the second half to indicate that the Town would come out on top. The Rovers, indeed, were dangerous for three or four minutes, but the Town began to quicken their speed just when spectators were beginning to feel that the game would continue monotonously to a blank finish. The left wing attacked as the result of clever passing, in which Fraser joined, and Reid and Yardley began to go through with more zest, and a magnificent shot by Rennie would have found the net but for the watchfulness of Whatley, who got across in time to touch the ball round the upright. Haydon did wonderful work in a very hot period, but once Yardley got right through and seemed certain to score, but misdirected when he had the goal at his mercy. Dennis then got clean away, and again a rightly placed centre would have brought a goal, but he lifted the ball too far for Reid, Yardley and Pointon.

The Town were now the better side; however, and when Reid put the ball through

for Dennis to sprint again, a neat centre was just too high for Yardley to net with his head. POINTON, however, was well placed, and, without waiting for the ball to drop, shot hard; Whatley framed for it, and the ball struck his chest, but eluded his grasp, and dropped over the line. Whatley retrieved it, but the referee was right up, and at once gave a goal. Rotherham was disposed to argue, but got no satisfaction. The Town came again, and Reid sent Yardley a lovely pass. The inside right, again with the goal at his mercy, scooped the ball over the bar. Reid then skimmed the bar with a terrific shot, but a minute later WOODS took a fine pass from Fraser, eluded two or three defenders who attempted to trip, and wound up with a great goal, the ball flashing past Whatley at tremendous speed.

ROVERS' BEST CHANCE.

The Rovers' best chance of the match followed. The right wing was responsible, and Culley rushed between the backs, the ball at his toe, and seemed certain to score, but Abbott anticipated his hard shot cleverly, and punched the ball away to the left, Graham lifting it out of danger.

Play in the closing stages was as interesting as at any stage of the game. The Town had the upper hand, and Yardley once hit the upright, while Whatley made some clever saves. At the other end Whatmore failed to accept a good chance, and Williams sent a hard shot across goal, but the end came without further score.

THE BETTER SIDE.

Luton were the better side after the interval, but the Rovers played hard, strong football, and a little luck in the first half might have changed the result in their favour, always provided that the Town had nothing in reserve. The second half proved that they had, however, and they won on their merits. Abbott has come right back into favour, and deserves to, for he is very confident, always alert, and his anticipation and agility were put to the test with satisfactory results. It was nice to see the backs giving him plenty of room in which to operate, and Kingham and Graham were again on their best behaviour. There was nothing to choose between them, for they stood up sturdily to a rather hefty attack, and won by sheer skill. Graham is doing great work just now, and is sure to attract attention from outside on this form.

COMBINATION.

The halves again played cool, clever football, and gave lessons to the opposition in the art of nursing their forwards. One cannot individualise, for all three played with great skill, and kept the ball down magnificently when the temptation to follow the example of the Rovers and boot hard was considerable.

The forwards were not so deadly as recently, but the conditions were all against fast forward play. Foothold was very precarious, and thrustfulness meant a courting of broken limbs. Reid again led the line skilfully, his passes being well gauged, and giving possession to wingers on the run. Yardley was the hard worker as usual, foraging and passing well, but was not so successful in marksmanship. Woods gave a splendid show, and after the change of ends was brilliant. Dennis got plenty of work, and both he and Pointon were fast and clever, and always likely to bring danger.

For the Rovers, Haydon was a great back, and Bennett not far behind. The middle men played resolutely, and the forwards made many bright attacks, but their work was not so methodical as that of the Town when the latter began to see the reward slipping from their grasp.

Mr. Attwood controlled the game well, keeping up with the play, and being prompt in his decisions. Little fault was found by the 6,000 spectators.