

BRISTOL ROVERS BEATEN

LUTON'S SECOND HALF SUCCESSES.

(By CRUSADER.)

LUTON TOWN did not get off the mark so quickly on Saturday as in previous weeks, but they proved too clever for BRISTOL ROVERS in the second half, and won comfortably by two goals clear. The Rovers played workmanlike football in the first half, though there was not so much method in their play as in that of the Town. It was good enough to come near scoring on several occasions. Restraint was exercised by the players in a most commendable manner on the hard ground, and any inclination to overstep the mark was very promptly put down by the referee. If there were occasions when we thought that Mr. Attwood was a bit too strict, and hardly did justice to the Town, we had to admit that in the long run he never swerved from his ideas of fair play and dangerous play, and he was quite impartial and efficient. I think he gets better, and one could have wished that he had handled the Cup-tie the week previous.

A MID-FIELD STRUGGLE.

It was very largely a mid-field struggle in the first half, and though the spells of pressure by the Town were the longer, there were distinct threats in the raids of the Rovers, and Abbott actually had to handle the ball more often than Whatley. Still, there was nothing quite so dangerous to Abbott's happiness as the instances at the other end when Reid upset Bennett with a strong shoulder and had a clear course. The referee, however, thought too much force had been applied, and whistled up the centre-forward. There was another occasion when the centre-forward appeared to be pushed by Haydon when Whatley alone had to be beaten, but the referee saw no offence.

THE PULL-OUT.

It was a good, clean contest in the first half, and at the change-over and for some minutes afterwards there was not a clear perspective of the result. The Town had not pulled out to the full extent on the very slippery ground, but began to do so after the Rovers had made several good attempts early in the second period. Reid and Yardley were thrustful, Dennis, cleverly fed by Woods, and Pointon, swung across good centres, and the middle men backed up the attack. Several free kicks were well-placed, and it was largely due to the fine defence of Haydon, ably seconded by Bennett, that the Town's efforts were frustrated for 20 minutes. Whatley had made some good saves, and he was more unfortunate than faulty when the Town took the lead. Dennis sent over a centre that was too high for Yardley. The ball disturbed the inside-right's hair, but fell just right for POINTON, who had closed in, and he shot with great force. Whatley positioned all right, and appeared to have the ball, but the spin carried it out of his grasp, and it fell over the line, the referee promptly signalling a goal.

There were further good efforts by the whole line, and then WOODS, accepting from Fraser, wove a mazy path through the defence, and finished with a great shot that beat Whatley all the way and put the Town two in front.

ROVERS' RECORD SPOILT.

The Rovers were not done with, and though Reid grazed the bar, and Yardley missed good openings, there were one or two spasms at the other end that kept Abbott alive, and once he brought off a wonderful save at close quarters from Culley. However, the end came with the Town's goal intact.

It is worthy of note that this was the first occasion in a League match that the Town defence had not been beaten, and it was also the first game of the season in which the Rovers had failed to score. The Rovers had played 18 games including Cup-ties, and averaged over two goals per match, and so the Town defenders could regard their clean sheet on this occasion as a certificate of pride.

Undoubtedly Abbott's save from Culley late in the game broke the Rovers' record, and he deserves all praise for his really skilful display. We have a new goalkeeper, but on his present form Abbott is good enough for anything, and every follower of the club will hope that he maintains it. Kingham and Graham played splendidly at back, and there is a really good understanding in the rearguard. Abbott was able to make clearances that his backs have usually preferred to take in like circumstances, and so his vision of the play was more comfortable, and he justified their confidence. Both kicked well considering the insecure foothold, but the placing left room for improvement.

A SKILFUL ATTACK.

The middle men gave a capital exhibition, and for speed, resolution and artistry they were much better than the Rovers' intermediate line. The manipulation by Black and Fraser was delightful, and though the latter still overdoes the dribbling at times, he is the most promising half-back the Town have had this dozen years. Black is fulfilling now the good things that were said of him when he arrived in Luton, and Rennie is as good as he was at any time last season. A player that can displace any one of the three will have to be a really high-class exponent.

The forwards reap the benefit of this middle line play, and though not taking unnecessary risks in this game, showed a bit more class than the Rovers. They were not so deadly in front of goal, but I think most of us felt sure that only the slippery state of the ground deprived us of another good score. Reid's leadership again was of a high order, and Woods was a real craftsman. Dennis responded well to his partner, and though his centres might have been a bit better, he got through quickly and cut in at the right moment. Yardley was full of zeal as usual, and always a dangerous factor, while Pointon muddled nicely, and completed a meritorious line.

The Rovers had a good rearguard, and Bennett and Haydon each played finely. The middle men were industrious rather than clever, but kept up the pace to the end, and the forwards' good goal record could be well understood, for they worked well, and Williams and Evans often shone.

There were 6,000 spectators.

LUTON. — Abbott; Kingham, Graham; Black, Rennie Fraser; Pointon, Yardley, Reid (S.), Woods, Dennis.

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

Referee: A. J. Attwood, Newport.