

GRAND WIN AT GILLINGHAM

LUTON'S FIRST VICTORY AWAY.

Brace Each for Rennie and Dennis.

By Crusader.

"WE have generally proved too good for our visitors in our home games, and we are looking forward to avenging ourselves for the half-dozen goals they scored in the first game."

So said the official match card of the GILLINGHAM club on Saturday, and the cartoonist also had a prediction that I have handed to the right quarter for consideration. There was the cocksureness that one naturally expects from a side holding a much better position than their opponents, and to all appearance the general impression was that LUTON TOWN had simply arrived to be a chopping block. As usual, the reports in the London papers do scant justice to the Town team. They teem with suggestions that the conditions favoured Luton in some mysterious way, and that the "Jills" were out of luck. The handful of supporters from Luton reinforced by a few sailor boys anxious to give the "bottom dog" a little encouragement, know that from start to finish the Town played like a winning side, and that the big margin of victory did not flatter them at all. The "Jills" were made to look a very poor side, indeed, and if anything, they had less of the game than was the case when they were so heavily beaten at Luton. The number of shots put in by the home forwards was negligible, and they got very few chances. The most difficult work that Abbott was called upon to face took the form of long shots from the home halves, when the ball skidded from the greasy surface at an alarming pace. On the other hand, Hebden was frequently framing to face shots from the Town forwards, and he made half a dozen remarkable saves, while many shots flashed in dangerous proximity, and two or three times his goal had wonderful escapes.

A GREAT DISPLAY.

Even remembering the very fine performances of the Town just before Christmas, including Cup-ties they have shown nothing this season to equal the display given at Gillingham, and they could have had more goals if Rennie had attempted rushing tactics, for he was given several opportunities in the second half to increase the substantial lead. There was a style and polish about the exhibition that was as wonderful as it was new, and the whole team, from one to eleven, had an equal share in the unexpected but fully deserved success. At no part of the game did Gillingham appear as foemen worthy of the Town, and there were extended periods when they were revealed as a hopeless and demoralised quantity.

Some of the papers refer to the penalty incident as a case of "unfortunate" handling. Before then the Gillingham goal had sustained heavy pressure, and it was following a brilliant save by Hebden, and while he was prone, that Tyler deliberately punched out a shot from Rennie that otherwise was bound to score. It was the only thing Tyler could do to prevent the ball going into the net, and there was not a murmur against the referee's decision other than that made by one or two Town players, who felt that the ball was already over the line before Tyler hit it. Dennis' penalty kick was brilliantly saved by Hebden, but he could not get the ball away, and while he was down DENNIS had recovered and shot into the net.

Time and again the home goal was in danger after this, but the second goal came quite unexpectedly. A pass by Yardley to RENNIE was followed by the latter pivoting on his right foot and shooting with tremendous force. Hebden dived and got his hands to the ball, but the pace was too much, and the ball landed safely in the rigging. Even then the home supporters did not seem to think that such

a bad position could be true, but the Town continued to show complete mastery, and at the interval were good value for their lead.

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Hopes of the home followers that the natural elements would be a decisive factor in the second half were speedily doomed. Brightly though the Town had played with the wind and rain at their backs, I think their later play was even better. Now and then the "Jills" made desperate efforts to throw the Town off their balance, and often methods were introduced that called for the whistle. The Town defence refused to be flurried, and, truth to tell the attempts at shock tactics were never allowed to develop. The spectators said nasty things about the home club's latest captures, and Millington and Dominy were told to get back to Everton, and Poxton to West Bromwich. Wilcox made several bursts, but Graham or Richards usually took good care that he did not get too close, and he had few shots.

The Town continued to give Hebden plenty of opportunity to shine, and he could not be blamed for the defeat. RENNIE got the third goal when Robertson failed to kick cleanly as Yardley pushed the ball up to the centre-forward, who made no mistake in steering past Hebden as the goalkeeper ran out. Subsequently the Town played attractive football, the attack and the middle men showing splendid co-operation, and many corners were won. Rarely did the home forwards get anywhere near Abbott without finding a bar put up, and at the 77th minute DENNIS capped the finest movement of the afternoon with a delightful shot, and placed the issue beyond doubt.

TEAM SPIRIT AND WORK.

It was team spirit work and skill that gave the Town their reward. It was as great a pleasure to see as to write about. The rearguard, for the second time in three games, was scatheless, though Abbott had one of the easiest afternoons of the year. His backs took care of him, and played magnificently, while the halves gave a superb display. All three were on their best form, and Fulton was altogether too quick and clever for the home inside forwards. With Black and Millar also keen as mustard, and playing like champions, the exhibition of the middle men was simply great.

Woods and Banks were the principal worries to the home defence. Not that they were doing a lot of work in the goal area, but because they planned most of the assaults, and paved the way for their colleagues to get through. Woods in the first half and Banks in the second, and the other three were always on the spot ready to do the damage. It is a long time since I saw a middle line and back division so hopelessly outwitted and out-manceuvred as Gillingham in the second half, and the crowd, after a period of chafing anxiety, gave the Town a lot of praise. Yardley, Rennie and Dennis all did fine work, and if the team can be kept together and will reproduce this form our fears are at an end.

Gillingham's best were Hebden, Robertson, Rogers, Dee and Poxton.

There were 4,000 spectators.

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GILLINGHAM	0

GILLINGHAM. — Hebden; Robertson, Tyler; Rogers, Crawford, Ellis; Millington, Dee, Wilcox, Dominy, Poxton.

LUTON. — Abbott; Graham, Richards; Black, Fulton, Millar; Banks, Yardley, Rennie, Woods, Dennis.

Referee.—Mr. R. G. Rudd, Witleaden.