

# HAPPY EASTER FOR LUTON TOWN.

## FIVE POINTS FROM THREE GAMES.

### Safety Now in Sight.

By Crusader.

At Luton on Good Friday:—

|                                                                                                          |   |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---|
| LUTON TOWN                                                                                               | 5 |
| TORQUAY UNITED                                                                                           | 0 |
| Scorers.—Rennie (3), Woods, Dennis.                                                                      |   |
| LUTON.—Abbott; Graham, Richards; Black, Fulton, Millar; Banks, Yardley, Rennie, Woods, Dennis.           |   |
| TORQUAY.—A. W. Bayes; Wellock, Wragge; Good, Davis, Clarke; Mackey, Ringland, Griffiths, Budd, Pattison. |   |
| Referee.—Mr. E. C. Sambrook, Swansea.                                                                    |   |

At Luton on Saturday:—

|                                                                                                        |   |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---|
| LUTON TOWN                                                                                             | 1 |
| PLYMOUTH ARGYLE                                                                                        | 1 |
| Scorers.—Banks and Sloan.                                                                              |   |
| LUTON.—Abbott; Graham, Richards; Black, Fulton, Millar; Pointon, Yardley, Banks, Woods, Dennis.        |   |
| PLYMOUTH.—Craig; Cosgrove, Russell; Logan, McKenzie, Hardie; Matthews, Sloan, Richards, Leslie, Black. |   |
| Referee.—Mr. J. V. Pennington, Reading.                                                                |   |

At Torquay on Monday:—

|                                                                                                |   |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---|
| LUTON TOWN                                                                                     | 4 |
| TORQUAY UNITED                                                                                 | 0 |
| Scorers.—Yardley (2), Dennis, Pointon.                                                         |   |
| TORQUAY.—Bayes; Cook, Price; Gough, Davis, Good; Mackey, Griffiths, Ringland, Budd, Thomas.    |   |
| LUTON.—Abbott; Graham, Richards; Black, Fulton, Millar; Nunn, Pointon, Yardley, Woods, Dennis. |   |
| Referee.—Mr. E. C. Sambrook.                                                                   |   |

In accordance with popular surmise the Easter holiday games made a considerable difference in the outlook of the Football League clubs. The wooden spoon has been making us blink for months and months, but during the last few weeks the conditions have eased a lot, and something of a catastrophe will take place if Luton Town return to the unenviable situation occupied almost from September to March. Those of us who have had faith in the players, even while criticising more or less harshly, are happy now to regard the comparatively elevated position in the League. We have never been so high this season, and, not satisfied with the long-wanted victory away at the expense of Gillingham, the Town added a like success this Easter. By their performances they have done a lot of things worth noting. They gained their second double of the season at the expense of Torquay United; beat the goal average of last season when they finished eighth in the table; surpassed their best total of goals since the war (80 in 1925-26); inflicted the severest defeat Torquay have suffered at home, and recorded the best goal average against that club (9-0); are the only League side against which Torquay have failed to score; topped the century of goals for League and Cup-ties combined; and have now surpassed any club in the whole of the League for the number of goals scored away from home.

#### A BIG RISE.

It was only the exceptionally fine goalkeeping of Craig, of Plymouth Argyle, on Saturday that prevented the Town taking the full six points from the three League games, for the Plymouth team were otherwise a well-beaten side. All things considered, it was a very happy Eastertide indeed, and at the moment, if not absolutely safe from the two lowest positions in the League table, they have risen from the bottom to fourteenth in three weeks, and are now, to all intents and purposes, quite safe. Five points from their six games would put them safe on goal average if all the other clubs got the full possible number of points from the remaining games, and that is quite an impossibility, since several of them have to meet each other. Of the six games to be played two only are at home. Merthyr on Saturday, and Walsall twice are included in the list. A further victory at Merthyr is perhaps too much to expect, and yet, if the team plays with the spirit and skill displayed in the Easter matches, they should win.

Perhaps it would be well to repeat here the highest possible points for each club; and the figure they may obtain if winning home games only.

|                | Points | If Win         | Highest |
|----------------|--------|----------------|---------|
|                |        | New Home Games | Poss.   |
| Luton          | 32     | 36             | 44      |
| Gillingham     | 32     | 38             | 44      |
| Watford        | 30     | 38             | 42      |
| Norwich        | 28     | 34             | 40      |
| Walsall        | 28     | 34             | 38      |
| Bristol Rovers | 26     | 32             | 38      |
| Merthyr        | 29     | 33             | 37      |
| Coventry       | 27     | 31             | 37      |
| Torquay        | 25     | 29             | 35      |

It is clear from the above that the issue is not absolutely safe for any of the clubs, but the Town have much better prospects than six of the clubs, and they have also the advantage of goal average.

#### THIRTEEN PLAYERS.

In the three Easter games 13 players were required. Rennie was hurt in the match with Torquay at Luton, and so Banks took his place on Saturday, and Pointon played at outside right; Banks was injured in the match with Plymouth, and so Yardley led the forwards at Torquay, Pointon moving to inside right and Nunn taking the right wing vacancy. A feature of the games was the solidity of the defence, and in the last five games Abbott has only been beaten twice, while the forwards have chalked up no fewer than 17 goals. Indeed, the Town goalkeeper has not had a great deal of work, thanks to the cast-iron tactics of Graham and Richards, who have paired exceedingly well. Both played grandly in the three games, and could they have found such form in the early part of the season the anxiety would have been as to championship chances rather than to the worries of re-election.

It is not merely the rearguard that has risen to the occasion with such glowing success, for the middle line is now showing up better than at any period of the season. Black's skill has never been questioned, but the apparent lack of stamina deserved it very often. In recent games he has gone the full 90 minutes with the best, and his skill is unimpaired. Fulton has evidently profited by his spell with the Reserves, and is now doing better work than ever. Millar has returned to his very best, and the three of them have not only eased the defence of much labour, but have given the forwards plenty of work.

Nunn found at Torquay that he can play left or right wing with equal capacity, and Pointon that he can do useful work as an inside winger. Yardley retained his thrustfulness, and is still of centre-forward type. Rennie did the hat-trick on Friday; Banks, his deputy, scored against Plymouth; and Yardley got a brace at Torquay. Woods has been a fine captain, and Nunn and Dennis each showed capital form.

The struggle is not yet over, but we feel sure that in a week or two we shall say, "All's well that ends well."

#### TORQUAY'S VISIT.

The game with TORQUAY UNITED on Friday was an easy thing. Though the visitors started briskly and kept the ball in the Town half for a considerable part of the first half-hour, when one summed up the work they put in it was found that their chances were few in compari-

son with those that fell to the Town before the change of ends. The light ball and fast ground handicapped all the players, and it was only because the Town persevered in their efforts to get it under control and keep it low that they subsequently mastered the visitors. Play was not too clean, the visitors being at fault very often, and the referee spoke to two or three of them, evidently with some severity.

There was only one goal in the first half, and that fell to RENNIE, for a bad miskick by Wragge let in the Town centre-forward to beat Bayes at close quarters.

In the second half the visitors were routed, and had the Town played all out for goals they must have got a big bag. As it was, RENNIE soon headed a second from Dennis' centre; WOODS got a third; RENNIE the fourth, and DENNIS completed the scoring with a great goal. Rarely did the United get near Abbott, and they were forced to defend desperately. On the other hand, the Town were playing well within themselves, evidently reserving themselves for the visit of Plymouth on Saturday. It was a good win, and gave the Town another little lift in the League table.

#### PLYMOUTH'S LUCK.

The difference that a good defence makes was exemplified on Saturday, when PLYMOUTH ARGYLE came to Luton. A strong breeze was behind the Argyle in the first half, and there were periods when it seemed likely that they would get a good lead before the interval. They scored through SLOAN in 16 minutes, and then nearly got another, the Town goal escaping narrowly. The Town, however, improved, and the Argyle goal had many narrow escapes before the change of ends, and at the retirement there was only a goal in it.

The second half found the Town indisputably the better side. Rarely could the Argyle get over the middle line, and at times practically the whole of their players were defending. Within five minutes of the restart BANKS rushed the ball through for the equaliser after Craig had been brought down by a fine shot from Yardley. The Town pressed incessantly, and Craig gave a grand display in goal, while his backs were kept busy the whole time. Corners fell to the Town on either flank, and many of these were placed beautifully, especially by Dennis, but Craig's long reach enabled him to get at shots that no ordinary goalkeeper could have stopped. Now and then the Plymouth forwards made a raid, but these were of a spasmodic character and of brief duration, and the Town were right on top, but could not get the ball into the net. In the last five minutes the Argyle goal was besieged, and in the very last minute two corners were forced. David Richards came up into the goalmouth, and he only just failed to rush the ball into the net.

It was a very fine game, and the honours rested with the Argyle defence, especially Craig, who has never kept goal better. Some of his saves were superb, and he was given a cheer at the close of the game.

#### FOUR AT TORQUAY.

After a long and tiring journey, occupying nearly twelve hours on Sunday, the Town stayed at Paignton on Sunday night, and then went into Torquay on Monday morning. They gained a brilliant victory, and were value for a bigger margin than four goals clear. As will be seen from the teams above, there were changes on both sides, and the injury to Banks gave Pointon a chance to show his worth as an inside forward.

Two goals were scored in each half, and if the ground had been less lumpy, and more conducive to accurate passing and shooting, they would have increased their score. There were only 2,500 spectators, but they enjoyed the very fine play of the Town, especially in the second half, when they outmanoeuvred and outwitted the home halves and backs by very fine passing. Most of the home side's good work came from the right wing, where Mackey, the former Town player, was evidently anxious to do well against his old club, but he did not get good support. Yardley's thrustful little ways were a constant menace to the home defence, and it was a pushful bit of work that enabled him to rush the goalkeeper and score the first goal following a long shot by Fulton. The second came from DENNIS, who was able to shoot through after receiving a very fine centre from Nunn. The Town did by far the more attacking, though Abbott and his backs were seriously troubled now and then. At half-time the score was:—

|                |   |
|----------------|---|
| LUTON TOWN     | 2 |
| TORQUAY UNITED | 0 |

Torquay made a desperate bid in the early stages of the second half. They more than held their own for some time by dint of hard kicking and individual dash. Abbott had a few difficult shots to stop, but generally he was so well covered that he had plenty of time. When the Town took command midway through the half they showed clever football, the passing being on the ground, and there were many triangular movements by the flanks and by the inside men. It was a really dainty bit of combination by Fulton, Pointon, Nunn and YARDLEY that enabled the last-named to dash through and score with a grand shot thirty minutes after the restart. The issue was practically safe then, but POINTON capped another delightful movement by Millar, Woods and Dennis a few minutes later.

It was a splendid win, and the heaviest defeat sustained by Torquay on their own ground this season, unless one accepts Northampton's victory of 5-1 as equal. It was also the second double victory the Town have secured this season, and the sixth time this year that the defence has had a clean sheet.

#### AT MERTHYR.

For the game at Merthyr on Saturday the kick-off is fixed for 5 p.m. owing to the Merthyr club trying to cater for those supporters who do not leave work until late in the afternoon. There is always a vigorous struggle at Peny-darren, and in view of the position of Merthyr this game is sure to be as keen as any. By taking three points from Watford this Easter Merthyr have slightly improved their position, but they have an awkward time ahead.

The Town team is not decided at the moment of writing, but Rennie and Banks are fit again. It would appear to be a question as to who shall play on the right wing. May they win.