

A GRAND START.

LUTON TOWN'S CONSISTENT IMPROVEMENT.

Six Points From Four Games.

By Crusader.

At Northampton on Thursday:

NORTHAMPTON TOWN	2
LUTON TOWN	2
NORTHAMPTON.—Hammond; Watson, Hicks; Allon, Brett, Odell; Harrington, Smith, Bowen, Lincoln, Weston.	
LUTON.—Abbott; Kingham, Richards; Black, Fulton, Millar; Daly, Yardley, Rennie, Woods, Dennis.	
Referee.—Mr. F. H. Burton.	

At Exeter on Saturday:

EXETER CITY	1
LUTON TOWN	1
EXETER CITY.—Campbell; Pollard, Miller; Clarke, Mason, Christie, Purcell, McDevitt, Cameron, Houghton, Kirk.	
LUTON.—Abbott; Kingham, Richards; Black, Fulton, Millar; Daly, Yardley, Rennie, Woods, Dennis.	
Referee.—Mr. W. Musther, London.	

At Luton on Monday:

LUTON TOWN	4
NORTHAMPTON TOWN	0
LUTON.—Abbott; Kingham, Richards; Black, Fulton, Millar; Daly, Yardley, Rennie, Woods, Dennis.	
NORTHAMPTON.—Hammond; Russell, Hicks; Wilson, Brett, Odell; Eccles, Smith, Bowen, McNaughton, Wells.	
Referee.—R. E. Elphes, Maidstone.	

LUTON TOWN have opened the season in handsome contradistinction from last season. They then opened the season with four consecutive defeats, two at home, and they lost twelve goals to three. On Monday night they played their fourth game of this season, and have yet to suffer a reverse. Perhaps the most gratifying feature was that their latest game was most convincing of all. In the opening match of the season we felt that they had been a trifle fortunate to get the verdict over Brighton by the only goal of the match. In the second, played at Northampton on Thursday, we felt that their good fortune had persisted, though they played better; at Exeter on Saturday they maintained that useful form; and on Monday they rose to their best, and thoroughly outplayed the Northampton side at Luton. From the four games they collected six points, and scored eight goals to three. One is tempted to say that this is the way to promotion, but the season is scarcely born, and we dare not talk in such terms yet awhile. If such a wonderful average could be maintained up to Christmas, or if we could rely upon the players consistently playing as on Monday night, we might feel thus inclined. There is no reason why it should not be, for I hold that Brighton and Northampton are two of the most powerful sides in the Division, and both opened the season with much higher prospects, if reports are to be believed, than Luton.

DON'T MENTION IT—YET.

Until the latest game there was not a supporter who could not have pointed out weak spots in the team, and, I daresay, that idea persists in every mind, but the fact remains that a fairly solid foundation has been laid, and has resulted in a slight easing of financial difficulties, for the crowd follows a winning side, and big crowds mean resources from which necessary reinforcements can be made. The "gate" on Monday night was £630, and though a large number of spectators will themselves be engaged in the game on Saturday, when Southend United are on view, this amount should be largely increased. I am assured that the directors are alive to these facts, and that there will be no hesitation if investment is justified. A cause for satisfaction, however, is that there is only one new man in the team that has done so well, and there are real indications that it is not an absolute necessity to spend big money to get good players. It would be a fine thing if the club could continue on the path of success without spending big money, and the players who have taken part in the four games to date can, and, I believe, will, strive to keep together and to maintain the improvement shown on Monday night. We must not mention promotion

yet, however, but simply look forward to a continuance of the good work.

AT NORTHAMPTON.

It was natural that few supporters had much faith in the ability of the team to hold Northampton on Thursday night. There was only last year's form to offer a basis of judgment, and thereon unfavouritism of the "Cobblers" was readily determined. The unlooked-for happened and the "Hatters" shared the booty by a very fine recovery in the second half. The story of the match was told in the "Saturday Telegraph" very fully, and there is no need to repeat details here. Northampton scored twice in the first half through BOWEN. The first goal should never have been allowed, for the scorer was well offside, but the second was a delightful goal, and fully deserved. With a lead of two goals clear at half-time the "Cobblers" appeared to be certain winners, but in the second half Luton showed vast improvement, and Rennie emulated the feat of his vis-a-vis, and registered twice without response, and the game was drawn.

AT EXETER.

PROBABLY there is no place Luton Town visit with more confidence than Exeter, and again on Saturday they managed to bring away a point, in spite of the fact that the City were playing their first home game, and were very earnest in their intent and endeavours to open a winning account. Certainly, they had more of the play, but they failed to master the dogged and persistent Town players, who, in one respect at least, were unfortunate not to secure both points.

The game was contested at a fast pace considering the hot weather, and as the ground was very hard scientific football was difficult. Plenty of big kicking was seen, and this was all to the advantage of the defenders, for before the forwards could get control the backs and halves were tackling vigorously, and generally no time was lost in getting rid of danger at either end. At intervals each goalkeeper was severely tested, and in the first half Abbott in particular came out of exciting scenes with credit.

Luton had the worse of the conditions, too, for they faced a glaring sun, and as they had little time to stretch their legs at the end of the journey, they were rather slow in getting into their stride. The backs, however, beat off stern assaults, and as the minutes fled the forwards began to take a more prominent part in the contest. The pace was splendidly maintained to the interval, just before which Luton got their goal. YARDLEY was the scorer, following a rather lengthy attack, and he deserved commendation for the way he slipped in and took advantage of the failure of the backs to clear.

Last season Luton were leading by two goals at half-time, and in the early stages of the second period the City played well enough to get on level terms, and eventually to win the match. Similar rushing tactics were tried last Saturday after the interval, but while the City were dangerous, and came near to equalising several times, they were kept at bay, and before they did succeed Luton should have increased their lead. Rennie put in a magnificent long shot that Campbell could not hold under the bar, and the ball spun over his head, but he turned and regained possession. He was well over the line, but the referee was a considerable distance away, and declined the appeal, the justice of which was generally conceded.

It was only after another bout of pressure on the home goal had been stemmed that the City left wing got clean away, and Kirk passed in for CAMERON to rush the ball into the net at close quarters. Chances fell to both sides after this, but neither side could score again. The City made great efforts in the last few minutes, but the Town backs defended gamely, Richards especially shining, and the end came with a well-won point to bring back to Luton.

Abbott kept goal splendidly, and Kingham and Richards, the latter notably, put up a sound and vigorous defence. The half-backs showed improvement all round, and there was a little more understanding forward, but by no means was the team work comparable with the best displays of last season. Neither in the middle nor the front line was there any brilliant figure, but all the team worked with fine spirit and perseverance. There were 7,000 spectators.

AT HOME.

Just as there were considerable numbers of Luton supporters at the County ground, Northampton, on Thursday evening, so the "Cobblers" brought a large contingent with them to Luton on Monday. Frankly they admitted that their favourites were outclassed, and though there arose from the stand and the terraces urgent calls to individual players and to the team collectively to make some sort of show, the appeal was in vain.

Only at infrequent intervals in the first half did the "Cobblers" make anything like a good fight. For the greater part of the 45 minutes their halves and backs were involved in a desperate struggle to thwart the Luton forwards, who, time after time, swept down on Hammond's charge, and the goalkeeper made splendid saves before he was beaten. Previously one of the finest opportunities of the game was missed by Bowen, who shot straight at Abbott when a goal seemed bound to accrue, but the Luton attacks contained a more sting, and there was always a greater likelihood of Hammond being beaten than of Abbott suffering that trouble.

A GOOD LEAD.

DENNIS opened the score by heading through from Daly's centre after a corner kick had been forced; and this occurred 35 minutes after the start. In the very next minute RENNIE had followed suit from a clever pass by Yardley, and the Luton men several times came within an ace of increasing the lead before the interval. Their play had been very convincing and they deserved all they got before the change of ends.

In the second half the "Cobblers" did a lot better, but their forwards were not often on the mark, and the Luton defenders played so strongly that they beat off all attacks. The safety mark had been reached when 25 minutes of this half had been ticked off, for RENNIE took a pass from Dennis and beat Hammond all ends up. The line work of the Luton attack was much better than that of their opponents, and shortly before the end Daly tore past his old colleagues and made a perfect opening for YARDLEY to score the fourth goal and complete an easy win.

IN THE REAR.

It was easy because the players were

better together than in any previous game. There was better team work, and from rear to van the departments worked with nicer unity of purpose, and better perception of each other's position. Abbott had but two or three anxious moments in the course of the match, and his backs covered each other and him in an intelligent manner. They kicked strongly, and the tackling was very determined, so much so, especially in the case of Richards, that the visitors often lost the ball almost as soon as they got it.

MIDDLE MEN PROFIT.

Middle line work was on a more scientific basis; the ball was kept on the ground at least fifty per cent. more than in any other game, and this faculty is a great advantage. Black showed his best footwork, and practically every time he got possession served his colleagues usefully. Fulton, too, mended his habit of ballooning the ball up the centre. His destructive work was as ruthless as ever, and though still requiring further tuition in the art of passing up the middle and of opening out with a clean-cut pass to the wings, he did magnificent work and refused to acknowledge defeat. Millar also gave a balanced display, and kept a closer watch on the wing man than is his custom, while he nursed Woods and Dennis to good purpose.

DALY'S METHODS.

The crowd wanted to see Daly fed a lot more, and he certainly had more employment than in other games, proving that with the right pass he can make ground and provide opportunities for his inside forwards. He revealed for the first time to us that he has a fine turn of speed, but what I liked best of all about his play was the moderation of strength in his centres. The first goal came from a lob that deceived the defence to leave Dennis with a good chance; other centres were killed by the Northampton defenders' knowledge of his methods, but he made the fourth goal as simple as the first three letters of the alphabet. Close in as he was, most wingers would have blazed away at goal, but he simply turned the ball inside to the man whose position was safest, and the goal was easy. Yardley fed his partner better, and the two should get on well if the inside man bears this lesson to heart. He lacks nothing in courage, and as he kept position well in this game, Daly was all the happier for it. The cleverest inside forward on the field was Woods. I must admit that after the game at Exeter I did not expect to find the Luton skipper in such form on Monday. He foraged and feinted, and opened up possibilities practically every time he received the ball. Often he spoon-fed Dennis, and was not averse from challenging the opposition to a lusty charge. Dennis did not seem comfortable until he had scored, and was not at his best until the second half, when he made a lot of speedy runs and centred well. Rennie is not a leader in the best sense, but is getting among the goals all right, and with better passes up the middle he will show that he can feed his wingers. He did it many times in this game, and I hope he will keep on his shooting boots, for this is his best recommendation.

"COBBLERS."

For the "Cobblers" Hammond again kept goal splendidly. He strikes one as likely to get a bit overwrought, but has safe hands and good judgment, and was not to blame for any goal. Hicks was the more reliable back, and Brett put up a rugged and untiring game at centre-half from an obstructionist standpoint, but was not in the same class as Odell when it came to forward support. Wilson was just as useful as a fellow of his size should be. There was only Bowen in the front rank that seemed to appreciate the full purport of his job, though Wells showed skill when he received employment.