

FIRST WIN AWAY.

LUTON TOWN STILL GOING STRONGLY

Merthyr Die-hards.

By Crusader.

WHETHER it is a case of "green eye" or sheer ignorance, the fact remains that few football prophets have much confidence in Luton Town's ability to win matches. Some of them must be getting a nasty set-back by the manner in which their hopes for other sides are coming undone. In a summary of forecasts for each of the Saturday games the Town have played I find the following figures: At home to Brighton nine forecasts were in favour of the Town, 13 for Brighton, and 13 to draw. For the match at Exeter two gave Luton to win, 29 predicted a win for Exeter, and four gave a draw. By that time the prophets had begun to sit up and take notice, for the Town had taken three points out of Northampton, and so when Southend were to visit Luton no fewer than 39 were on the side of the Town, a couple went for Southend, and five gave a draw. For the match at Merthyr on Saturday there was a slight reversion for 18 gave Merthyr to win, 10 were on the side of Luton, and a dozen suggested a draw.

A GRAND SLAM.

Had these prophets seen the game I should have expected for the home match on Saturday next an absolute unanimity that Luton would win. There was a grand slam for all the ideas of the followers of South Wales, and it is well nigh inexplicable that the Town won by only an odd goal after being four goals up when less than five minutes remained for play. The views expressed in my notes last week that Merthyr are an improved side are not withdrawn in the slightest degree; it was not a case of Merthyr's deterioration, but of Luton's improvement. In this game the Town reached a standard surpassing any previous show. I make bold to say that had they played in all their games as in this they would have taken every point possible. It was a good, clean game, with plenty of incident, and the "Martyrs" played as hard as ever, putting up a fair and fast game, but the Town, starting on a confident note, gradually asserted superiority, and at times played almost classic football. Five of the Town players suffered injury, for which there were short stoppages, but there was no bad foul, and the only dissatisfaction one could feel was that the Town players did not continue to press to the full their advantages.

TWO GOALS' LEAD.

In a fast and even 20 minutes Merthyr made quite as many attacks as the Town, but there was not a like understanding; the Town played a swinging, open game, making the ball move to some tune, and when the first goal arrived after 25 minutes' play they never looked back until they had gained a big lead. The scorer was RENNIE, and it was a delightful effort, for he took on the move a nice pass from Woods, and the ball flew like a flash over the leaping figure of the Merthyr goalkeeper. Abbott and his backs had plenty of work, but the Town were always the more methodical and the more dangerous, and when Daly went through and centred for BEDFORD to shoot the second goal just before the interval the home stock went down with a rush. Luton came very close again before the interval came with the score:

LUTON	2
MERTHYR	Nil

Luton began as they had left off for the breathing space—with verve and dash, and though the home side made many determined attacks, especially through the agency of the left wing, the Town backs were generally masters of the situation, and the scenes at the other end were always more tense and exciting. As the game wore on the Town showed even better understanding, and a quarter of an hour remained for play when they scored the third goal. In ordinary parlance one might have said then that the issue was beyond doubt, but it was not. This goal came through a sort of trio. Fulton sent Daly away, and to vary his procedure the winger, instead of trying to gallop through to the line, espied Rennie with a course up the middle. The ball was cleverly pushed through; RENNIE collected it; Gibbon dashed at him, but the centre-forward nimbly eluded him, taking the ball with him, went forward a few paces, and then shot true as a dart

into the farther corner of the net. McKenna not having a ghost of a chance.

FOUR UP—NINE TO PLAY.

Better was to follow, for the Town backs and halves kept their forwards well up to the work, and assault after assault was directed with a speed and an energy that evoked admiration. It was a clever movement on the left wing that outwitted the Merthyr defence. Woods and Bedford had several times exchanged places in passing bouts, but, for a change, as Bedford ran inside with opponents after him to intercept the probable pass, Woods went straight on, and then delivered a high centre that topped the defenders; YARDLEY positioned splendidly, and as the ball met the ground he hit it first time, and McKenna was beaten all ends up. This goal came exactly nine minutes before the end.

QUICK WORK.

A few minutes' desultory play followed. The Town backs were well up the field when a sweeping pass was sent out to the home right wing. Brown was in a flagrantly offside position, and the appeal came with full confidence, but the referee was also well out of line, and he allowed the winger to go on. Richards and Millar each went too late to be of any use as an obstacle, and the ball sailed into the goal-mouth for DENT to apply his head at the right moment, and Abbott was beaten. From the kick-off the Town made a slight skirmish on the left, and then the ball was returned. The home right wing dashed through, and Richards slipped down as he made his rush, with the result that FEATHERBY'S foot got the ball, and Abbott was beaten far the second time.

BLACK—ABBOTT.

From the kick-off the home team rushed away with new exhilaration. Once more the right wing got the better of the cripples, Millar and Richards; the ball was swung across the field; Borland sent it back into the goal-mouth, and Abbott appeared to have it safe, but BLACK slipped in and tried to hook it over his own head. He failed; the ball struck his leg and went into the net. There was a tremendous filip in the interest of the spectators, and the referee looked at his watch before starting the game again. There was a minute to go. The Town were not making any further mess. The ball went to the left wing, and away up the field. The seconds seemed to be a long time passing, but Woods, Millar, Bedford and Richards all saw to it that there was no further trespass by the home forwards, and the whistle went leaving the victory with the Town.

THE PLAYERS.

But for the slackening in the last five minutes little fault could be found with the Town team. Every man played well, and the planning and scheming was very sound. Abbott made some good saves, but the home forwards did not show such sting as the Town forwards in front of goal. Kingham and Richards played finely throughout, and Richards was superb, better than in any previous game, though he had his foot severely hurt in the first half, and an injury to the groin in the second after the Town had scored the fourth goal. All the middle men behaved magnificently, and Fulton could be paired with Richards as showing a skill exceeding anything he has yet given. Black and Millar were also in fine form. Rennie put in the best exhibition since he became a centre-forward, and in passing and shooting alike was splendid. Yardley and Woods were strong links in a clever and intelligent line, and both Daly and Bedford completed a line that showed its appreciation of fine support.

Merthyr were a plucky team, but their football was not comparable for quality with that of their conquerors, and the crowd, exceeding 6,000, were not slow to admit the fact.

LUTON TOWN	4
MERTHYR TOWN	3

MERTHYR.—McKenna; Gibbon, Scott; Beaver, Bishop, Warren; Brown, Featherby, Dent, Vaughan, Borland.

LUTON.—Abbott; Kingham, Richards; Black, Fulton, Millar; Daly, Yardley, Rennie, Woods, Bedford.

Referee—Mr. H. Kilsby, West Bromwich.