

DOWN AGAIN.

LUTON DEFENCE CRUMPLES AT SOUTHEND.

By Crusader.

AMONG the 7,000 spectators at Southend on Saturday were a knot of Lutonians who, for an hour, lustily sang "Are We Downhearted?" They must have been downhearted at the finish, for I am fairly certain that few of them have seen Luton play so well and yet lose so heavily. For individual and collective skill the Town were far ahead of the United, but could not drive home their attacks. The Southend spectators and officials were asking how such a team could lose so heavily to Crystal Palace. They had their answer in the second half.

Four of the goals scored by the winners were the results of breaks away, and the other, the first, came because the Town backs did not get settled to their job, and there was a gap through which BAILEY went almost at will, and then put in a ground shot that would have been saved, I think, if Abbott had not been facing the sun. He did not start for the ball until it was going past him, and when he measured full length on the ground the ball was in the back of the net.

It was remarkable how the Town forwards failed to equalise. They outwitted the home defenders with almost monotonous regularity, and the home goalmouth was the scene of many fierce struggles, but when a shot was attempted there was usually a block there, which was a tribute to the powers of recovery of the home halves, who also called upon their inside forwards for a lot of assistance, and got it. Corner kicks, centres and free kicks were placed in the goalmouth with unerring accuracy, but always the obstructionists prevailed.

For a long time the Town backs were positioned near the middle line, and the halves were joining the forwards in the endeavour to get the ball into the net. Rennie, in spite of the constant shadowing to which he was subjected, twice deserved to score with quick shots taken on the move, and one of these scraped the foot of the upright and went outside. Moore being at the other end of the goal. Clark was the next best marksman. Once Woods was put through and seemed a certain scorer, but his shot was punched out by Moore.

Spasmodic raids were made by Shankly and Clenshaw, but these caused trouble only occasionally for Abbott, whose job was very simple, and he had not a tenth of the work that fell to Moore's duty in the first half. The Southend trainer was surprised that the Town were not four goals up at the change of ends, and that was a moderate estimate of their superiority.

SOUTHEND 1
LUTON 0

Southend had to consider their position at the interval, and they changed their tactics to good purpose. Instead of trying to play the Town at their own game, they relied chiefly upon the long kick and then play in the second period was very much like that of Crystal Palace in the Cup-ties. As in those games the methods paid, for they got four goals without reply, and mainly because they proved too strong for the Town defence at close quarters.

In the first half Southend had mainly relied upon their centre-forward for shooting, but he was well watched, and though

he often bowled over Kingham or Graham, he was baulked. They now relied very largely upon the cutting-in of their wingers, and profited by the change. Clenshaw had been the main source of trouble in the first half, but Oxley was more in the picture in the second, and played cleverly. Though the United were having a better share of the game than they had before the interval, the Town were still the more dangerous.

Then came the second score to the home team. Kingham miskicked and went down, and Clenshaw, always with an eye to the main chance, darted in and got the ball away from the recumbent back, and with no obstacle went right into goal. His shot was cleverly parried by Abbott, but the ball went direct to the on-rushing OXLEY, from whose legs it rebounded past the goalkeeper. Before the cheers had died away Oxley came galloping through on the right, swung the ball almost under the bar, and DONOVAN'S head beat Abbott's fist in getting at the ball, and it was in the net again.

Try as they would, and they never relaxed, the Town forwards could not overcome the Southend defenders. Skillful movements brought the ball to the Southend goal time after time, but the blockade was ineffective, for the home backs and halves packed well, and Moore was always on the alert. Whenever a Southender got his foot to the ball the movement usually had to be reconstructed from midfield. Corners were of no use, and there were a few of them, while Daly and Dennis, cleverly fed by their partners, got across many passes into the danger zone, but always the defenders prevailed.

After a fierce onslaught by the Town, OXLEY snapped up a loose ball, and dribbled right through to lift the ball over Abbott's head as the goalkeeper came out. This was the best goal of the game, but there was to follow a consolation prize for SHANKLY, who got through as the result of a misunderstanding between Kingham and Abbott, the former being responsible, for the centre-forward got past him and to the ball when either back or goalkeeper might have had it if there had been a clear understanding of what Kingham was going to do.

Still the Town did not relinquish their efforts, and the finest bit of combination during the game was seen when Black initiated a movement in which Yardley and Daly passed and re-passed as they went half the length of the field, but it came to nothing, and the result was:—

SOUTHEND 5
LUTON 0

The Town defence was decidedly shaky, and there was a lack of firmness and stamina. Graham and Clark were the pick in this department, but all the forwards did good work, and none played better than Yardley and Daly, whose wing combination surpassed anything they have done before. Rennie was shadowed relentlessly from start to finish.

There were 7,000 spectators.
SOUTHEND UNITED 5
LUTON TOWN 0

SOUTHEND.—Moore; French, Brophy; Dixon, W. Johnson, Morris; Oxley, Bailey, Shankly, Donovan, Clenshaw.

LUTON.—Abbott; Kingham, Graham; Black, Clark, Millar; Daly, Yardley, Rennie, Woods, Dennis.

Referee.—E. E. Small, Bristol.

FOOTBALL