

THE DUEL IN DEVON.

LUTON TOWN'S USUAL FATE AT PLYMOUTH.

But Still in the Running.

By Crusader.

THERE was but one thing wanting to make LUTON TOWN'S visit to PLYMOUTH a happy experience—the points. They had to return without what they had most earnestly desired to obtain. Without equivocation it may be said that they did not get less than they deserved, for it was only the admirable defence of Banes and the backs that prevented the Argyle winning more handsomely than the score suggests.

That the players were to succeed there can be no question whatever, but they were unfortunate in catching the Argyle in their most determined mood, and it was freely stated after the game that had the Argyle played against all their opponents at Home Park as they had played against the Town, the little matter of promotion would have been settled. I can well believe that, for the Argyle have dropped eight points at home, and it is hardly possible for those of us who have seen the Argyle, either at Luton or at Plymouth, to imagine clubs like Southend and Walsall succeeding where the Town failed.

Real summer weather prevailed on Friday, when the Town made the journey, and there was a likelihood of the players suffering from the heat. However, on Saturday morning the sun was unobtrusive, and a high, chilly wind came from the South. I thought it might change at noon, but it grew rather stronger, and when the players took the field, in the presence of 8,000 spectators, it was felt that the spin of the coin might make a deal of difference to the result. Subsequent events left one still in doubt as to what might have happened had the weather been calm, but I am bound to say that there was nothing in the Town's play to lead one to the view that they could ever have beaten the Argyle on the latter's form of Saturday.

The first half was largely a struggle between the Town defence and the Argyle, and as the latter did not show much ability to conquer the puzzling wind, we from Luton became happier as the minutes went by, and the Town goal was still intact. The Town players felt that they were extremely unfortunate to be a goal down from one aspect, as they claimed that the goal should not have been allowed owing to Banes being impeded, charged, mildly perhaps, but effectively, as he endeavoured to repeat a feat he had already performed three or four times. The referee would have none of it, however, and the goal was counted.

I don't know if Mr. Moon expected the Argyle to get a goal somehow before the change of ends—there is no suggestion of unfairness here—but he was quite three minutes over the forty-five before he blew his whistle, and he seemed to have lost all count of time. This was not because the play was very exciting. There were just about half-a-dozen real thrills in the first half, and at least four of them came at the Town goal. The other two were when Rennie drew a couple of shots, the first promising to get to the net, but the wind made the ball swerve aside. The second was when Rennie drove in one of his best, and Craig managed to save at the second attempt.

At the other end, Black was the chief source of danger, but Kingham stood up to the clever Scot well, and in their many sharp duels the Town back held his own exceptionally well, though there were two or three dangerous centres. The most awkward situations, however, came from the splendidly placed flag-kicks by Black, for he got the ball just at the right angle for the wind to carry it under the bar, and Banes was hard put to it to get away three times.

Richards also got the ball away from the line twice when Banes was beaten, while the goalkeeper made several good saves. When the goal came it was from one of the corner-kicks taken by BLACK, the ball being blown into the net by the wind, and the Town players appealed en masse against the point because the goalkeeper had been prevented by Forbes from getting to the ball. The referee consulted the linesman, and confirmed his decision, but I doubt whether the other official assisted him, for there was a crowd of players in the goal-mouth, and none in the stand could tell actually whether the ball was touched by an inside forward or not. It was not. So said all the players, and at half-time the score stood:

PLYMOUTH ARGYLE 1
LUTON TOWN 0

With the strong wind in their favour, the Town should have had the upper hand, but they never showed ability to master it, and with the Argyle making defence an almost impregnable barrier, and the Town forwards seldom getting the ball right, and not knowing what to do with it when they did, or, not doing the right thing as often as they should have done, Craig had not an uncomfortable time. Moreover, the Argyle halves and backs were able to keep the ball down well, and to send it skimming low and wide to their wing men, or straight up the middle to the centre-forward, with the result that the Town backs were never on slack time.

Shots of a sort there were, and chances missed because there was more hurry and scurry than balanced and combined effort, but Craig was not seriously troubled more than three times. Rennie again put in the best shot of the second half from the Town side, but Craig made a fine save, and he also punched away cleverly from corner kicks. The ball travelled at a pace that was all too much for the Town forwards, as it had been for the Argyle in the first half, but the big

fault was the lack of promptitude in transfer, and in judicious placing.

Against this the Argyle's play was in lively contrast. Black, trusted by his colleagues, was fed with fine passes from Leslie and McKenzie, and time after time he dribbled with the ball at his toe for thirty or forty yards, and then middled or shot. He it was that got the second goal, for after an attack initiated by Bowden had been temporarily beaten off, good understanding by Leslie ended in BLACK getting a pass and beating Banes with a beautiful low drive that would have left any goalkeeper helpless to save.

At a later stage another brilliant shot by the left-winger was saved at full-length by Banes, and a shot from Forbes crashed against the bar and came down in the goal-mouth, an appeal for a goal being unheeded. Kingham and Richards were often in the picture with strong tackling, as in the first half, and they were in no wise to blame for the mastery asserted by the Argyle forwards. Both played determined football, and Kingham was very skillful in the open, while Richards' best naturally came in front of goal. Banes was also blameless, and made a number of clever saves.

The Town middle men did a lot of hard and useful work when they were on the defensive. They were tenacious, and were sharp in recovery, and had they been able to change their methods in the second half so that the forwards got the necessary assistance that was expected, the result might have been different, always providing that the attack had risen to the occasion. I have no wish to harp on the old theme of the wing halves playing too far inside again, but must point out that the Argyle owed much to the fact that their flank halves paid far more attention to the Town wingers than to the inside forwards.

It seems useless to expect the Town flankers to do anything of the kind, and why they stick to the policy when goals come so regularly I do not know. With another wing the equal of Black to face next Saturday I shall be surprised if Master Temple does not make his mark on the Town target. There was certainly more understanding shown by Kingham and Clark, and Richards and Miller, in the first half, last Saturday, than has been usual. It was not maintained.

The forwards were off colour as a line. Neither Yardley nor Woods touched his best, and the line was never well-knit in any raid or general attack. The result was that Daly and Bedford did not see too much of it, and the latter got a black eye when he did go for it once in the first half, when Bland meant to have it. Rennie shot well when he had the opportunity, and also gave a few nice passes, but the Argyle halves and backs played well on top of their opponents, and Craig had less work than he anticipated.

The Argyle are a well-balanced side, even without Moses Russell, and though the backs were by no means great the middle men were strong and relentless, and the forwards were a skilful combination.

PLYMOUTH ARGYLE 2
LUTON TOWN 0

PLYMOUTH.—Craig; Bland, Price; Mackay, Fulton, McKenzie, Realy, Forbes, Bowden, Leslie, Black.

LUTON.—Banes; Kingham, Richards; Clark, Fulton, Millar; Daly, Yardley, Rennie, Woods, Bedford.

Referee.—Mr. C. F. Moon, Bristol.

FOOTBALL.

On the Town Ground.

SATURDAY, APRIL 27th.

THE LEAGUE.—DIVISION III.

LUTON

V.

FULHAM

KICK-OFF 3.15.

USUAL PRICES.

MONDAY, APRIL 29th.

THE LEAGUE.—DIVISION III.

LUTON

V.

TORQUAY UNITED

KICK-OFF 6 P.M.

USUAL PRICES.