

MERTHYR MASTERED AT LUTON.

DRINNAN AGAIN SHINES.

By Crusader.

HAD it not been for the re-arrangement necessary in Luton Town's front rank, on Saturday, there would not be need for detailed criticism of their game at home with Merthyr Town. The visitors were in a lowly position, and were at the bottom of the League table when Luton had finished with them, but their record was not so bad as it appeared to be on paper. They suffered the misfortune of losing a player midway through the first half, Smith being injured in a charge in which he and Clark went for each other, quite legitimately, and the Merthyr player's shoulder was so badly damaged that he could not take any further part in the game.

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Still, that did not make a lot of difference to the result. The Town were always the better side, and Merthyr could only have won by a very big fluke. Yet it was worthy of note that although this was the first game for seven weeks in which the Town defence had not been pierced, it was also the first game for seven weeks in which Merthyr had failed to score. One could understand that from the activity of Wilkins, their inside-right, who was the best forward on the field, and played delightful football in this, his last game for the Welsh club. It was not his fault that the Town goal did not fall.

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In six minutes DRINNAN headed a fine goal for the Town, and less than five minutes later he headed the second. The first came after Daly had drawn the defence, and centred to where Drinnan was waiting unmarked, and the second from a corner-kick placed by Daly, after James had made a fine save from Birch. These were the only goals of the first half, but more would have been scored if the Town had maintained their energy and enterprise at the pitch of this first ten minutes. They seemed content to hold the visitors pegged down to defence.

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Now and then Merthyr made a burst and threatened to score, but only rarely tested Harford. Once, however, Western missed by inches with a fine drive, and later Fulton came to the rescue after very loose play had given the visiting forwards an open goal, Parker being robbed by the Town pivot when the goal was at his mercy. Generally, however, the Town forwards were pressing, and a little more steadiness by Drinnan, and less deliberation by Birch, would have brought two more goals before the interval.

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LUTON 2
MERTHYR 0

YARDLEY registered the third goal within a minute of the restart after very fine combination on the right-wing, the centre-forward's shot beating James all the way. For a few minutes the Town endeavoured to increase their lead, and came very near it several times. Then there was a period of inertia, livened now and then by the advances of the visitors,

led by Wilkins, and had it not been for his skilful work the Town backs and halves might well have joined the forwards. Harford saw the game from afar as a rule, and had a kick now and then to relieve the monotony.

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It was Wilkins who dribbled clean through, and, when he seemed certain to score, Western sailed in and kicked the ball off his toe, and it went sailing and soaring high off the target—a very bad blunder. This was the signal for a revival by the Town, and the Merthyr goal had a hot time. Yardley shot grandly on several occasions, Drinnan, Bedford and Birch all went close, and James and his backs and halves were desperately engaged in repelling a continuous assault. Eventually BEDFORD headed the fourth goal after Birch and Daly had drawn the opposition.

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There was little of note after this, and the Town always had the mastery of the Welshmen, and many spectators had left the field before the end. They could be well satisfied with the general combination of the Town, and Rennie's absence was not sorely felt. Yardley made a splendid leader swinging the ball out to his wings, and bustling the defenders persistently. Birch made a successful first appearance, and with a little more experience he will be an asset to the Town. Daly played splendidly, though he had the benefit of Smith's absence. Drinnan again gave a delightful exhibition, but Bedford, clever betimes, was not at his best.

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All the middle men played strong and assertive football, Fulton being a tower of strength in the middle, and Clark and Smeaton were better than usual on the flanks. The former is settling down to his job again, and Smeaton did better in this game than at Torquay. Kingham and Richards left no cause for complaint. They had a lighter task than usual, but were always alive to danger, and protected Harford in such a manner that he had almost a holiday.

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The visitors made a gallant resistance, and there were times when they played good football. James, their new goalkeeper, was a success, and his backs were more than useful. The middle men were triers without being fast enough to cope with the Town's speedy forwards, while Wilkins was a grand forward, and several times came near to scoring.

There were 8,000 spectators.

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LUTON TOWN 4
MERTHYR TOWN 0

LUTON: Harford; Kingham, Richards; Clark, Fulton, Smeaton; Daly, Birch, Yardley, Drinnan, Bedford.

MERTHYR: E. James; Cross, Creighton; Woodward, Hargreaves, Smith; Cruickshank, Wilkins, Western, Parker, Slack.

Referee: Mr. C. F. Moon, Bristol.