

LUTON FAIL AT HOME.

VIGOROUS CUP-TIE STRUGGLE.

By Crusader.

WITH their exit from the F.A. Cup Competition on Saturday, LUTON TOWN became just one of the clubs marking time, for their League prospects are anything but bright, and the most that can be said now is that the club has to fight to maintain a respectable position in the League. It is an early closure of the bright hopes that resigned when the season began. The only consolation is that the club can try to make things interesting by even thus early arranging a campaign for next season—the discovery of players, and an accession of financial strength. This latter part of the business is as essential as the other, for the comparative failure of the team has left the exchequer as badly off as at the beginning of the season.

QUEEN'S PARK RANGERS won because they were the better Cup-tie team, and though fortunate to get a couple of goals through mistakes by the home defenders, they were not undeserving of success. The teams were fairly evenly matched on the run of the play, but the Rangers' tactics were more likely to prevail, for they played real Cup-tie football from start to finish; vigour, dash, and hard work in every department, with the knowledge that there would not be another day to fight if defeated. There was more spirit in their play, especially team spirit, and with the defence playing for safety most of the time, it can be said with truth that their success was a triumph of tactics.

Of course the defeat is a tremendous blow for the Town, as it was hoped a big run in the Cup Competition would compensate for the comparative losses in the League gates. There will not be £200 out of this game, and whoever spread the rumours that the ground would be unfit did the club a great disservice, for many stayed away from that cause. As proving the extent of these rumours Mr. Bob Hewison, the Rangers' manager, said that he had received a telephone message from Coventry saying that the match was off owing to the ground being unfit, while all Saturday morning Mr. McCartney was answering telephone messages from all over the county asking for news. It was too bad that the rumours were spread.

But to the match. The ground was very heavy, and the Rangers profited by this, for they were a hefty side, and resolved to keep the ball moving—the right policy. They began and finished in that fashion, and though the Town managed now and then to give "a Roland for an Oliver," they did not maintain the swinging style so consistently as did the victors. It seemed as though they had come to the conclusion before leaving the dressing room that they would knock the Town off their game, for this was the spirit in which they opened. Quickly were Harford and his backs called into action, and there were a few thrills before the Town got into their stride.

Then it was the good work of Birch that led to success. He and Daly combined to beat the Rangers' defence, and when the ball was passed to YARDLEY, that player made the most of his chance by scoring a fine goal with a shot that crashed into the net over Pickett's head. The goal came during the temporary disablement of Bedford, who had been kicked following a sharp attack in which a goal seemed probable, but he was not away long. The Rangers appeared to lose some of their confidence, but it was restored when they equalised as the result of a mix-up in the Town defence. The ball could have been cleared by either of the backs or the goalkeeper, but none read aright the intentions of the others, and GODDARD slipped in to score easily.

This goal gave the Rangers even more than an equality. It made them almost contemptuous of the Town defence, and they sized up the weakness and played on to it. That was the lack of understanding between Clark and Richards, and the result was that Howe, a comparatively young and inexperienced player, was made to appear the most dangerous of the Rangers' attack. Over and over again a wide pass found this player quite unmarked, and he could race into position before Richards could get near him, the result being that his centres landed in the goal-mouth when Richards was not there. Coward was not allowed such licence. It was following the essays of Howe that Goddard hit the post, and later COWARD got the second goal for the Rangers after Harford had frustrated his first attempt. On the whole the Rangers just about deserved their lead at half-time:—

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For a few minutes after the resumption it seemed as though the Rangers would have little difficulty in holding their lead, but then the Town woke up, and they deserved their equaliser, and with more thrustfulness would have scored several times. Bedford had been compelled to retire for the last twenty minutes of the first half, but re-started and took part in strong onslaughts. The success, however, came about as a result of a determined dribble by Fraser, who shook off several opponents in a fine dribble and then drove into the goal-mouth. Drinnan hooked the ball brilliantly, and as Pickett leapt the ball struck the bar and went over.

The referee was of the opinion that Pickett touched the ball in its flight, and awarded a corner-kick. This was taken by Daly, and YARDLEY headed a grand goal. For a long time the Rangers were forced to defend, and in middle of the Town played splendidly, but the Rangers defended stubbornly, and the danger never matured. Still, whenever the Rangers got away there was a more severe threat in their advances, and the Town defence never seemed reasonably safe. Once indeed, Harford saved his goal in the luckiest fashion, for he dashed out when Goddard rushed between the backs, and the ball struck the goalkeeper and rebounded.

The winning goal came unexpectedly. There was a sudden raid on the right wing, and the ball was transferred to the centre. Goddard pushed it to Howe, who was unmarked. He ran in, and was forced to the left by Clark and then Fulton dashed across, and with sliding tackle brought the winger's legs from under him. A penalty was promptly awarded, and PIERCE beat Harford with a powerful shot right away from the goalkeeper. The Town were not crestfallen. The went into the fray harder than ever, but they were not so cool as the opposition, and their attacks were beaten off.

In the closing stages, Fraser worked heroically to save the game, and Daly and Birch also did very good work, and the ball was in the Rangers' penalty area for a considerable spell. Pickett, however, was not severely tried. Once Yardley was fouled, and it appeared from the Press-box about a yard inside the penalty area, but the free-kick had to be taken from the penalty line. On a second occasion, however, he was tripped within half-a-dozen yards of goal, but the referee made no sign in spite of a fierce exultant and unanimous appeal from the crowd and the Town players. In the last few seconds the Town forced a corner, but of no purpose, and the game ended with the Rangers the happy side.

It was not an unpleasant game, though there were quite enough fouls, and some heavy charging, but scarcely in excess of what one expects in a Cup-tie from keen rivals, an enthusiasm rather than ill-feeling was the chief reason for offences. I am quite sure, however, that the Town players and supporters wish the Rangers a successful run in the Competition. We have more respect for them than for some of the more boastful clubs that put up a good show, at

Rangers stay longer in the Competition than any other London club.

Their main strength was in the middle line, an effective link between backs and forwards, and everyone of the three played well. Pollard and Pierce were valiant defenders, alert, dogged and resolute, and Pickett was a capable custodian. The forwards were a flashing line, with Goddard and Howe the most conspicuous, but all working to one end.

Harford's goalkeeping was good, and how far he was responsible with the backs for the Rangers' first goal is known only to the three. Richards sustained a bad kick early on, but kept going, and Smith put up a useful game. To the lack of co-operation between Richards and Clark reference has been made; the middle line appeared weaker than usual because of this, and it was in marked contrast to the fine work on the other flank. Fraser, indeed, was just about the best player on the field. Fulton was not so effective as usual, but the going in the middle was very bad.

The forwards did not get too much support from the rear, and had to do much "fetching and carrying." In their approach work they showed intermittent skill, but the inside men were usually baffled at close quarters. Yardley led well, and Birch showed some improvement, but Drinnan was not so successful as in recent games. Daly played well when he got the ball to advantage, and Bedford was useful in spite of his injury.

The attendance reached 10,235, and receipts were £645.

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LUTON.—Harford; Richards, Smith; Clark, Fulton, Fraser; Daly, Birch, Yardley, Drinnan, Bedford.

RANGERS.—Pickett; Pollard, Pierce; McNab, Cockburn, Neil; Coward, J. C. Burns, Goddard, Rounce, Howe.

Referee: S. F. Rous, Hemel Hempstead.