

Crusader Comments on a Poor Start.

Three points from four games, two of which have been at home, is poor fare, and does not augur well either for promotion or that other important feature—the F.A. Cup Competition and its financial bearings on the success of the club. Fortunately for Luton Town's management, the supporters have not allowed their disappointment to ferment too soon, and it is pleasant to feel that they recognise the probability of an early improvement.

They had some evidence of this on Monday night, for while the team can not be claimed as a model, there was a spirit of determination and eagerness that went far to encourage the loyal followers to feel that the turning point was at hand. There is need for immediate reinforcement in certain positions, if immediate successes are required, but I am well assured in my mind that these players we already have will soon bring the club to a happier status, and even if they do not succeed within the next week's games, I shall still feel that way.

At Selhurst on Saturday:—

CRYSTAL PALACE	5
LUTON TOWN	1

Scorers for Palace—Clarke, Frost, Simpson (5).

For Luton—M'Nestry.

CRYSTAL PALACE:—Inrie; Wetherby, Charlton; Frost, Barrie, Greeney; Harry, Havelock, Simpson, Butler, Clarke.

LUTON TOWN:—Banes; Kingham, Richards; Richmond, Clark, Hale; M'Nestry, Yardley, McGuinagle, Armstrong, Slicer.

Referee:—Mr. J. M. Wiltshire, Sherborne.

LUTON TOWN may well regard Selhurst as something of a "hoodoo" ground, and the influence was almost at its worst on Saturday. By the way the Crystal Palace began their business there seemed a real likelihood of beating that win of seven goals to one sustained by Luton in the replayed Cup-tie on an ice-bound ground a year ago last January. The Town players seemed to be just about as helpless as on that day, and the Palace just as efficient.

Four goals in half an hour was fierce going, but every goal was deserved, and it could not be said that the Town had deserved a goal, or that they had experienced very much hard luck up till then. Indeed, the Palace had come near scoring two or three times in addition to their successes, and while the Town were almost as often in the other half of the field as they were on the defensive, there was a painful difference between the methods of the teams, and it was herein that the Palace took toll.

Every goal was of the opportunist type, and it was the aptitude of the Palace forwards to make the most of their chances that so decisively won the game. They carried more punch than the Town, appeared to be better equipped in the matter of physique, and certainly did not refrain from using it in any department, though there have been more vigorous encounters between the teams.

There was a distinct tendency among the Town players to try and play a "hinter slowly" game, and the Palace halves were too quick on the ball for the Town halves, and their halves too quick for the Town forwards. So the Palace defenders were not given many anxious moments, whereas Banes and his backs were always at full stretch when the home forwards got on the move. Added to this was the unhesitating manner in which the Palace forwards and halves shot for goal when they got within range.

If charging were taboo I am sure the Town would be as good as the Palace, but it is an essential part of the game, and so long as players use their weight fairly they do well to use it. We had Richmond and Hale, and even Clark, omitting to do so, and it was not until the second half that they discovered the error. When they brought energy as well as such skill as they possessed into play they more than held their own, and the average spectator who saw only the second half would have said it was a very even match.

As in each of the two previous games, the Town were slow off the mark, not only slow collectively, but individually, and forwards and halves were hustled out of possession with a consistency that was very disquieting to the supporters, and threatened overwhelming defeat. The attacks were made usually by means of individual skill, and in this respect both Slicer and McNestry could be trusted to carry the struggle into the opposing territory, but the big Palace defenders gave no quarter, and rarely was Imrie troubled in the first half. Once Yardley made a great dribble, but McGinnigle kept expecting a pass, and Yardley was so hampered when he took his final shot that the ball trickled into Imrie's hands.

In the second half for some time the Palace renewed their tactics, but met with no further success until late, for the Town defenders were realising that more brawn was necessary, and gradually they drove the enemy back and eventually asserted some degree of mastery over the Palace halves, and both Wetherby and Charlton had to defend grimly. Imrie time after time nailed the centres from the Town extreme wingers by fine anticipation in advancing from goal, and his fielding was very safe. Once he was brought down, and a goal seemed certain, but he managed to get the ball away.

Bright play on the Town right wing showed some measure of understanding by Yardley of the needs and the usefulness of McNestry, and it came as no surprise that the latter scored. He had been a rare thorn for some time to Greener and Charlton, and at last he took a sweeping pass from Yardley, cut in, dribbling cleverly, and wound up with a shot that had Imrie beaten all the way. But the Palace promptly replied, and a bad mix-up among the Town defenders gave Simpson a chance of which he took toll, and completed his hat-trick.

At Luton on Monday:—

LUTON TOWN 2
BRIGHTON AND HOVE 2

Scorer for Luton:—Rennie.

Scorers for Brighton:—Vallance, Kirkwood (penalty).

LUTON.—Banes; Kingham, Richards; McGinnigle, Clark, Muir; McNestry, Yardley, Rennie, Bryce, Slicer.

BRIGHTON.—Webb; Brett, Curran; Wilkinson, Mooney, Dutton; Farrell, Kirkwood, Vallance, Smith, Wilson.

There were more changes on Monday night. McGinnigle reverted to right-half and Muir was brought in at left-half, while Bryce played inside left, and Rennie came back to the leadership of the attack. Brighton had a very strong side, Brett and Smith being the only newcomers. All the other players appeared in the Albion side against the Town last season.

Opening play was very much in favour of the Town. They were a very different lot as compared with their beginning at the Palace. The ball was swung about, and the reward came when McGinnigle, on one of the several occasions he sent the ball forward while the visitors were out of place, pined RENNIE, and the centre-forward scored with a wonderful shot after a minute's play.

For nearly half an hour the Town had the better of the exchanges, and nearly always it was through the long pass down the field, and Slicer, McNestry, Rennie and Bryce all came near scoring. Webb came out of some tight corners with credit, but once Rennie only just failed to add to his score when he put in a red hot shot that skidded past the upright.

The veteran Kirkwood engineered most of the Albion's attacks, and though the Town middle men showed a great improvement, they often found the visitors' vanguard too clever to hold. None the less was the game in favour of the Town, and perhaps their margin of one goal was not nearly enough to indicate their superiority.

In the second half, too, the Albion had great difficulty in forcing the Town back upon the defensive, and RENNIE scored after clever work on the right wing. Time after time the Town came near increasing the lead, and one or two chances were missed. Bryce hit the post once, and from the rebound Slicer scored, but was off-side.

The Albion got going now and then, and from a breakaway Kirkwood made an opening for VALLANCE, who slipped to and scored. Again the Town worked with great energy, and the Albion rearguard had a busy time. With about five minutes to play a penalty was awarded against Richards for an alleged foul on Smith, and KIRKWOOD scored.

The Town gave a greatly improved display. Banes had no chance with either goal, but Kingham and Richards played stoutly, though the latter was apparently mainly responsible when each goal was scored. The crowd did not agree with the official decision, nor did I.

Muir gave a skilful display on his first appearance with the seniors, and it was real football all the time. They will need to use their weight more, and McGinnigle must get dally when there are opponents on top of him. Clark was also at fault in this respect, but he also showed great improvement, and held Vallance pretty well.

McNeely again was the pick of the forwards, and Yardley is giving him more work, which is as it should be. Rennie has made a start in the goal-scoring, and we hope he is going to keep it up. He was more thrustful than usual, but can do a lot better yet. On the left Bryce may not have shown the orthodox play for an inside forward, but he was a lively factor, and brightened the line, while Silver also had more to do.

There were 1,000 spectators.