

## Football Dogs.

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Photographs by A. J. Johnson.



N easterly wind was blowing hard, when we were requested, by special invitation, to attend a certain football match, which, when all has been said and done,

has proved to be the most extraordinary exhibition of "footer" that has ever been known in the history of the game.

This most astonishing game of football took place not a hundred miles from New Cross, and we are indebted to the proprietors of the New Cross Empire, and especially to Mr. H. Raymond, their manager, for the arrangements which have enabled us to secure the remarkable pictures which illustrate this article. The football dogs, whose spirited play we are to chronicle in detail presently, are for the most part bull-terriers of high degree. They belong to the brothers Riccobono, of Manchester, to whose wonderful knowledge of animals and their training no small amount of praise is due.

The writer is willing to challenge any man of ordinary or extraordinary pluck to stand in any place of his own choosing with a football in his hand, and await the onslaught of the footballers shown in the illustrations of this article. Bull-terriers were bull-terriers ever, and Providence help the man who dare stand between them and the "leather" when once it is given over to be dealt with at

their mercy. It may well be imagined, therefore, that no small amount of trouble was required to induce these fiercest of footballers to agree to anything like rules.

In the first place, it was absolutely indis-

pensable to toss for sides — look at the result. "Heads I win, tails you lose." Could anything be more human, more expressive of anxious and heart-breaking expectancy than this? The two "captains," Bull-punch and Bull-rag, are watching the coin as it settles on the turf with a thud.



"HEADS I WIN, TAILS YOU LOSE."

Is it "heads" or "tails"? Never mind, they are off, and the fun threatens to wax fast and furious.

Again, however, restraint has to be put upon the too eager opponents, and a proper "kick-off" is arranged for, and it is a kick-off such as has never been photographed before. The magnificent attitude of the champion kicker of Bullshire has been secured with marvellous skill, and is a tribute to our unfortunate artist, who, not unlike the writer himself, dodged, for all he was worth, the awful rushes that over and over again became a source of awe and terror to the minds of the privileged few whose luck it was to witness this wonderful game.

We shall now endeavour to describe the match in something like professional style.

With a big wind blowing behind them, the visitors (you will spot them at once,



"THE KICK-OFF."

of course) were not long before they made their presence felt, and the game was not many minutes old ere they



the Bullrags' defence stood out much sounder than that of the home eleven.

At last the home team got well away, and the right wing beating all opposition, the ball came straight across to Bullfast, who would inevitably have scored had it not been for Bulldash, who saved a goal in

popped the ball into the net, the corner kick which led to it being splendidly placed by Bully. Bullrag, however, was charged ere he had a chance of getting at the ball, so that there was no hardship to the Bullpunchers in having the goal disallowed.



"THEY MADE THEIR PRESENCE FELT."

the nick of time by a spirited onslaught on the leather almost upon goal.

Half-time, of course, came as a matter of mutual congratulation; but, alas! there was no keeping these fellows in hand. We offered the visitors lemon, duly sliced as you see, but they would have none. They were anxious to start afresh.

Not a minute elapsed ere the home side nearly scored in a scrimmage, following a corner; Bullstop having saved before the final tussle. About this

"A SHARP TUSSE."

Though only three minutes old, there had been a good many interruptions to the game, every petty charge or spill being whistled up, but the Bullpunchers were not to be beaten.

Rushes and sharp tussles from end to end became the order, Bullstick playing in much improved form, and a few seconds before the interval Bullpunch saved a goal by a hair's breadth. There was little to choose between the teams, however. The Bullpunchers were perhaps a little superior in attack, but



"SAVED A GOAL BY A HAIR'S BREADTH."



"HALF-TIME."

period Bullstuf got in a rather long ground shot, and Bullstop, who had been partially covered by his backs, endeavoured to pick up, gathered the ball, but dropped it, and the Bullpunchers were, in consequence, no

which Bullrag was the leader, took the game to the Bullpunchers' half, where Bullrat effected a superb save.

The game had proceeded for some time when the efforts of the Bullpunchers' forwards were rewarded by the first point in the match. It was the right wing who introduced the good work, carrying the ball into close quarters.

Occasionally the visitors made a threatening dash into the home quarters, Bullstick doing useful work on the



"BULLSTOP ENDEAVOURS TO PICK UP."

goal to none. After that reverse the home team became far more dangerous than previously, and, to say the least, experienced very hard luck on one occasion, the ball going right over when everybody expected it to go into the net.

extreme left, but their shots were wide of the goal. On the other hand, the Bullpunchers, with not the best of luck, kept

A splendid bit of work by the Bullpunchers' forwards carried hostilities into the visitors' half, the passing and re-passing causing the greatest excitement. Good exchange kicking ended to the Bullpunchers' advantage, but a grand combined effort of the visitors' forwards, in



"PASSING AND RE-PASSING."



"CARRYING THE BALL INTO CLOSE QUARTERS."

pegging away with plenty of vigour but little method at the visitors' goal, in front of which Bullstump and Bullstand held their own, and Bullstop warded off several dangerous shots.

It may, perhaps, be permitted here to point out the umpires in the pictures that follow. Bullawe watches the game, or rather the ball, as it is tossed in a jumble of indescribable medley. He looks tired and worried — what umpire does not? — and distinctly wishes it were all over.

Bullbull is more determined — he sticks to his post like the champion umpire that he is, and no amount of excitement will draw him out of that imperturbable serenity in which we find him here. Fancy standing there as he does, when "well-played centre" accomplishes a feat almost unparalleled in the history of the game!

The finish, however, will for ever remain undecided. The superiority of the home team was, however, clear enough, for they played the better game all round, particularly as far as their forwards were concerned.

that the contest was one unequalled for dash and science; should additional proof be required, however, he has much pleasure in



"PEGGING AWAY WITH PLENTY OF VIGOUR."

reproducing here a photo. of the "leather" after the game, so that no doubts as to authenticity and fervour may be allowed to arise in the minds of the more critical followers of our national winter pastime.



THE "LEATHER" AFTER THE MATCH.