

CUP FIGHTERS OF

Down in Somerset is a football ground which slopes
a local team hopes to send powerful Sunderland

PLAYERS and officials of Football League clubs drawn to visit Yeovil in the F.A. Cup shudder, cross their fingers, and hope for the best. Yeovil is the oldest-established giant-killer in the business, and everyone in Somerset is convinced that Sunderland, due there this weekend in the Fourth Round, is beaten already.

This is Yeovil's Jubilee Season, and already the club has advanced further in the tournament than ever before. Down the years there have been twelve Cup ties against League clubs on Yeovil's famous sloping battleground. This is the thirteenth—a pointer which is not lost on the superstitious race that footballers are. Five of the League giants have been humbled there, and Somerset folk sav Sunderland will be the sixth.

There is the slope, which needs getting used to. There is good teamwork and the incentive to win that always makes non-League sides play a little above themselves. Above all, there is the shattering experience, for visiting players, of having "Play up Yeovil" shouted in their faces from spectators only a yard or two from the touchline.

That is the logical side of Yeovil's argument. But there is another force supposed to have played its part in its success: the lucky seagulls, the rabbits' feet, the horseshoes, the white heather, and the secret potions. What chance does Sunderland, with only manager William Murray's lucky cigarette case, stand against this formidable array?

Befitting a club whose colour is green Yeovil, through its chairman, Herbert Smith, confesses to a slight superstition. Mr. Smith is so satisfied with the progress made while wearing the old shirts that he is reluctant to start wearing the brand new ones presented by the women's supporters committee.



Team Mascot ten-year-old Rex Rainey. He is the one who puts ball on spot and cal heads. He has never seen his team beate

This, however, is his only personal concession to the occult. With reverent glance towards the horseshoe over the office door he explains that giant silver-paper one hanging on the desk facing Alec Stock, the player-manager-secretary-inside-right-captain was handed to Stock as he ran out for the First Round tie with Romford, and it would be a pity to throw it away.

All the other spell-binders have just as logical an explanation. The lucky seagulls often seen floating over the ground are there to mop up sandwich left behind from the previous match. Rabbits' feet have almost disappeared since the war; in their place is luxuriant growth of white heather.

Mr. Smith produced a box of heather sent him by his sister on the morning

Dressing-room Table is good place to talk over tactics. Player-manager Alec Stock (standing, centre) shows how he wants a quick goal scored immediately after kick-off

