

FOOTBALL.

LUTON AND THE LEAGUE.

ROUGH GAME AT READING.

LUTON SCORE TWO POINTS.

On Saturday Luton's second game in the contest for the Southern League championship was played, the Bedfordshire men having to travel to Reading in order to meet the local players. The team made the journey by the 10.45 train on the Midland Railway and an express leaving Paddington at 1.33. The Great Western Company provided a spacious saloon for the players, and those who undertook the lengthy journey were accommodated here. A brisk run brought the party to the Berkshire town barely half an hour before the time advertised for commencing the game. Crossing the Thames by ferry-boats the visitors soon arrived at the scene of action, and it was found that they were not the only enthusiasts, for about 3,000 excited beings were accommodated in the grand stand or round the ropes. The weather [was not altogether so fine as could have been desired, the drizzling rain which fell prior to the start rendering the turf slippery. The home side were first to make their appearance, and they were kept waiting close on half an hour, the "reds" taking plenty of time for dressing. At length they appeared, and the commencement was not longer delayed.

At 20 minutes past 3 the teams ranged up as follows:—*Reading*: Goal, Cannon; backs, White and Inglis; half-backs, F. Deane, Justins, and Knight; forwards, Lee and Wilson (right), Moore (centre), Stewart and Watson (left). *Luton Town*: Goal, Bee; backs, Chesher and McEwen; half-backs, Watkins, McCrindle, and Howe; forwards, Gallacher and Finlayson (right), Galbraith (centre), Allen and Prentice (left). It should be said that of the Reading team the following were borrowed from the Argyle and Sutherland Highlanders: Inglis, Lee, Wilson, Moore, and Watson. The referee was Mr. F. Crossley (Swindon), and the linesmen were Messrs. J. H. Hackett (Luton) and A. Webb (Reading). At the outset the referee, who wore a red and black striped coat which was somewhat confusing, was admonished by the crowd to remove the objectionable garment, but Mr. Crossley did not take any notice of the remarks. Losing the toss, the visitors started play and Gallacher was afforded an opportunity of putting in one of his smart runs along the line, but he was soon pulled up. A foul was awarded against the homesters amid loudly-expressed dissent, and thus early in the game it became apparent that the Reading crowd will take a lot of beating so far as noise is concerned. Prentice was presented with a chance at the Reading fortress, but White managed to interpose himself in the nick of time. From the throw-in which followed Galbraith sent behind. By a couple of throws the Berkshire contingent improved their position, but McEwen cleared well. A capital pass by Gallacher was not improved upon by Prentice, that player sending out. So far the game had been all in favour of the "reds," who had been exhibiting very pretty combination. Knight headed away a dangerous centre by Prentice, and Reading went off up the field at a good pace; they showed greatly improved passing, but they were not suffered to progress far. During a strenuous attack on the Reading goal Allen headed over the bar, and then Cannon was forced to bestir himself to safely dispose of a centre by Gallacher. Prentice was adjudged off-side, and a little later the same player took a snap shot at goal, McCrindle following with a good attempt when Cannon had dealt with Prentice's shot. The wearers of the black and white were busily engaged thereafter, but Howe proved an impassable obstacle, and the fray was soon transferred to the Reading territory once more. The home side were not to be beaten back for long, however, and in a minute or two Chesher was called upon to stave off danger. Prentice spoiled a grand centre from Gallacher by wild shooting, and White cleared well just after from the outside right man. A brilliant over-head shot by Galbraith must have caused Cannon some anxiety, but the home

must have caused Cannon some anxiety, but the home custodian managed to clear. The Luton outside left received a pass from Galbraith and sent in a particularly hot one and with McCrindle emulating this example the post of the ex-Scot Guardsman in goal was by no means to be envied. The biscuit town representatives were stopped for infringing the off-side law, but this served as only a temporary check, and they were soon found in the vicinity of Bee's charge, the ball being sent across the goal-mouth. Inglis was punished for fouling Galbraith, and from the free kick Finlayson narrowly missed scoring, while Gallacher had a good try a little later on from a pass by Galbraith. Cannon saved splendidly from a well-judged centre by Gallacher, Prentice failing to head in by the merest trifle. Two free kicks were registered against the "reds," one because Prentice got off-side and the other for a foul against the centre half-back. No ill effects followed, but Bee had an anxious period just afterwards, when a determined straggle took place in front of his citadel. The keeper behaved splendidly, however, and Cheshier copied his example a minute later. Finlayson was nastily brought down by Inglis, and Prentice centred from the kick, the ball eventually being forced over the Reading line, a corner resulting. From this McCrindle tried hard to score and put the ball near the corner of the goal, and Gallacher, who was lying handy, headed past Cannon. The Luton men redoubled their efforts after this success and came down determinedly. Galbraith, while trying to rush the goal-keeper into the net, was thrown over by the burly ex-guardsman, and then Cannon conceded a corner in disposing of a particularly smart attempt by Gallacher. Keeping up the pressure, the Luton men exhibited capital attacking powers. First Allen dispatched a beauty at Cannon which that player managed to keep out, and then Prentice raised the siege for a brief space by kicking over the cross-bar. The respite was not of long duration, however, for Galbraith secured and tipped on to Gallacher, who notched a grand goal and thus put his side two ahead. The same player almost repeated the performance immediately after the re-start, the pass this time being from Watkins. Hands against Galbraith and Moore were taken successively, and the next noticeable feature was a drenching downpour of rain, which served to render the ball additionally slippery and the leather correspondingly greasy. Gallacher continued to show up prominently on the right wing, and after some sturdy tussles in mid-field that player sent in a brilliant centre which was unfortunately not taken advantage of. A foul by Reading was duly noticed by the referee, but the kick did not avail the "reds" much, for in very little time Wilson was found attempting to lower Bee's colours. Hands against Prentice was next taken, and subsequently Allen shot wide. Galbraith tried a long one which proved ineffectual, and after Prentice had again been penalised for breaking the off-side law Howe distinguished himself by relieving splendidly. Justins missed execrably, and when Gallacher had overrun a pass by Galbraith the last-named was adjudged off-side. Reading had a first-rate chance of improving their position when McEwen and Bee had both been beaten, but the struggle resulted in the leather being kicked on to the net. Gallacher was thereafter unfortunate enough to injure his ankle and was obliged to leave the field. The interval arrived shortly after, when the following was the condition of the score:

Luton, two; Reading, none.

On the resumption the "reds" had only four forwards, Gallacher being still missing from his accustomed post. When Moore had shot very badly, Galbraith and Finlayson gave the best display of passing of the day. They made their way up the wing without a single Reading man being able to touch the ball, and cleverly finished by centreing to Allen, who was in a good situation for scoring. That player made no mistake, and the result was that the Lutonians were three up. It is only fair to say that this excellent combination was cheered by the spectators generally, though it should be added that as a rule the onlookers were very chary of applauding the leaders. A foul against Cheshier enabled the homesters to make an advance into the enemy's quarters and Stewart gave Bee a handful. Gallacher at this stage resumed and was heartily applauded, but his stay was a very brief one, for in a few minutes he found it necessary to retire for good. In the meantime a couple of free kicks presented the Reading team with openings which they neglected to avail themselves of, Stewart being responsible for a particularly wild shot when the goal appeared to be at his mercy. The visitors' centre man incurred the usual penalty by handling the ball, and then Prentice evoked a shout of derisive laughter by punching the leather when in mid-field. Bee had all his work cut out to preserve his goal from downfall, and when the custodian had come out to clear his lines just after Wilson kicked high over the bar. The home side succeeded in forcing the ball into the net a minute or so afterwards, Bee being tackled by no fewer than three of the opposing forwards, Stewart putting on the final touch. When the game had once more got into full-swing a very regrettable incident occurred, Wilson and McEwen getting at variance. It appeared that Wilson began the unpleasantness by kicking the Luton back, who retaliated, and in a second the pair were seen putting themselves into a fighting attitude. The referee promptly intervened, and for a time the breach was healed. Hands against Reading was registered, and then Prentice incurred the usual decision by standing off-side. The game became very exciting, and it must be confessed that the players indulged in rough tactics. After a foul against Watkins, McEwen and Wilson once more got at logger-heads, and this time the referee ordered both offenders off the field. During the remainder of the game the exchanges were marked by the unnecessarily vigorous play of certain men, and eventually Reading managed to score again. Towards the end they pressed continuously, but they failed to again beat Bee, and when the anxiously-awaited end arrived the Luton men had won two League points by the following totals :

Luton, three ; Reading, two.

In justice to McEwen it should be said that he was very seriously provoked, but it must as plainly be stated that his act of retaliation was unwarrantable. The occurrence was additionally regrettable at this juncture, when the club are not on the best of terms with the Southern League authorities. It is understood, however, that the referee accepted an apology from each of the offenders and promised to abstain from taking further action. Altogether the game was not in any sense satisfactory, though full credit should be given to the winners for the plucky stand which they made when deprived of two of their principal players. So far as ability was concerned, the first half may be accepted as a fair criterion, and it is not asking any stretch of imagination when the assertion is ventured upon that with their full team the "reds" would have defeated the Reading combination much more decisively. After all the fact remains that a victory was obtained, and there the matter must be allowed to rest.