

THE SOUTHERN LEAGUE.

LUTON TOWN v. SWINDON.

Played at Swindon on Saturday. Result :—

Luton Town	3 goals.
Swindon	nil.

The teams were as follow :—

RIGHT.		LUTON TOWN.	LEFT.	
		Bee (goal).		
McCartney.			McEwen.	
Watkins.		M'Crindle.	Collins.	
Gallacher.	Finlayson.	Galbraith.	Prentice.	Jack.
O				
Hayward.	Walman.	Andrews.	Jerrom.	Jones.
Ross.		Lawless.	Dipsdale.	
	Richardson.		Noble.	
		Williams (goal).		
LEFT.		SWINDON.		RIGHT.

Referee, Mr. E. G. McDonald; linesmen, Messrs. G. Worboys (Luton) and J. Williams.

Considerable interest attached to the return match with Swindon, it being the last of Luton's League fixtures. To Luton it meant a great deal. If they won, they would secure the second place on the League table; if they lost, there would be a possibility of Southampton drawing level with them.

Looking at the relative strength of the teams in the light of the League competition, there did not seem to be room for much doubt, but on the other hand there was the fact that the railway lads had accomplished some very smart performances on their own ground, while a journey of nearly 150 miles was not calculated to put the Reds in the best of form.

When the start was made from Luton by the 9.5 train (M.R.) on Saturday morning, circumstances did not look auspicious. Galbraith appeared with his eye bandaged, Prentice had his hand in a sling, and Watkins was as near as possible missing the train altogether. Indeed, the train had to be stopped for him. To make matters worse, only one trainer turned up instead of two.

After that things went all right, the team leaving Paddington by the 10.45 train, to which a saloon carriage was attached for their special benefit, and arriving at Swindon at 12.30. An adjournment was then made to Thomas's Temperance Hotel, where everything was found to be up to the door, the catering being about the best experienced this season.

The wind was pretty high when Swindon was first reached, but it afterwards increased to a gale, and was accompanied by sleet, which kept on throughout the match. The game could not have been played under more miserable conditions.

In spite of the weather, however, a crowd of something like 2,000 persons assembled to witness the encounter. And what a crowd it was, too. They yelled at the players and hooted the referee, and altogether gave as fine a display of rowdiness as one could possibly wish to see.

The referee had any amount of instructions as to turning this and that man off the field, but fortunately he remained pretty cool, and discharged his duties well. The crowd did not like this, and after the match was over, the aspect of affairs became distinctly threatening.

As it happens, there is no dressing-room on the Swindon ground, and both teams had to adjourn to a neighbouring public-house to go through the necessary process of arranging their toilettes. Thither they were accompanied by from twelve to fifteen hundred persons, who indulged in hustling and stone-throwing.

McEwen and McCartney, who received the friendly assistance of some gentlemen in blue, were kicked four or five times, and Watkins narrowly escaped being struck by a stone. The Swindon officials, who are disgusted with this rowdiness, which has manifested itself on other occasions, did all they could to ensure the comfort of the visitors, and not the slightest blame attaches to them.

As regards the match, good football was of course entirely out of the question. The wind was far too strong to allow of anything like combination. In the first half, Swindon, with the advantage of the breezes, did most of the pressing, but in the second they were seldom able to get over the half-way line.

The kick-off took place at 3.40, and Swindon, with the wind on, at once got the upper hand and forced a corner, from which they derived no benefit. Then play became of a more give-and-take character, and eventually Jack broke away, and Williams was called upon and found at home.

upon and found at home.

The Luton forwards had another go, and an attempt by Prentice, from a centre by Gallacher, missed by inches. Still it was a hard struggle for the Reds to make any headway, whereas the Swindonians were able to get down the field with comparative ease, in spite of the gallant efforts of the Luton half-backs and backs.

Bee had to save twice in succession, and on another occasion the homesters seemed certain to score, and would undoubtedly have done so but for the splendid defence of the Lutonians. Bee, especially, was showing champion form in goal, negotiating every shot with the greatest coolness.

One save in particulars was a very brilliant one. He had to run from one side of the goal to the other to a sharp low shot, and he happened to catch the ball in exactly the right spot, sending it skimming through the air and over the half-way line. When it is borne in mind that this was against wind and rain, I think it will be conceded that this was one of Bee's best performances this season.

Shortly after this little incident, Prentice had the satisfaction of drawing first blood. Unfortunately, however, the billet which the bullet found was not the right one, and there was no score. The ball, after it left the little 'un's foot, landed fair on the Luton linesman's nose, with a result highly diverting to all except the flag-holder.

Luton again attacked—in the right quarter this time—and Williams several times had to save, but the interval arrived with honours easy, nothing having been scored. Most of the play during this half had taken place on Luton territory, and it was only the stubbornness of the Luton backs and half-backs, and Bee's coolness in goal, that prevented Swindon establishing a substantial lead.

But even thus far it was pretty clear which was the beater team, and when Luton changed ends they did so without the slightest misgivings as to the result of the match. To have kept the homesters from scoring during the forty-five minutes was almost equivalent to winning the game.

Play had been pretty vigorous on both sides, and fouls were about evenly divided. The Swindonians, however, fared the worst, and at different periods Lawless and Walman had to temporarily retire.

When play was resumed, Luton, with the wind behind them, at once began peppering away at the Swindon goal, and within two or three minutes Galbraith had succeeded in notching the first point, breaking through from a return by Williams, who had punched the ball on to him.

Luton now forced a corner, from which Williams cleared, and Andrews broke away, but ran against McEwen, and the next moment was apparently busy in making a scientific examination of the earth's crust. At any rate, he seemed to forget all about the errand on which he started, viz., that of goal-getting.

The Reds again resumed their aggressive tactics, but for some minutes were held at bay. At last Galbraith beat Williams a second time, but off-side nullified the effort, and then Jack placing the ball well in again Ross kindly obliged by putting through his own goal.

The Lutonians now went at it with great spirit, and Williams had to save shots from Prentice, Jack, and Gallacher one after the other. Just after this, play had to be suspended for a time, Lawless coming into collision with Collins and receiving such a shaking that he had to be carried off the field. It transpired afterwards that his ankle was dislocated.

The play at this juncture was of a very sultry character, and fouls were unpleasantly frequent. Certainly science was at a discount. One thing only was clear, and that was that Luton had made up their minds to win, and that the Swindonians were equally determined that they should not if it could be prevented by hook or crook. The yells of the crowd had a very bad influence on the play.

After Galbraith had scored another offside goal, the Luton forwards got nicely into line again, and Galbraith obtaining possession at the right moment, scored a third goal. This was the last point registered, the game thus ending in a win for Luton by three goals to nil.

The character of the play in the second half may be judged from the fact that Bee never handled the ball. Although the game, as regards the quality of the football, was far from a good one, Luton were all over the better team, and the margin by which they secured the victory does not more than represent their superiority.

Great credit is due to the Luton halves and backs, all of whom played up strongly, for their determined defence in the first portion of the game, and as for Bee, he has never given a better exhibition. The forwards rendered a good account of themselves, and as they were much of about a muchness, there is no need to particularise.

For Swindon, Williams performed well between the sticks, and Richardson at back worked hard. Ross was the best of the halves, and Andrews, Jones, and Jerrom were the pick of the forwards.

The Luton team left Swindon by the 6.58 train, and arrived home at half-past eleven, very well satisfied with themselves and their day's work. Mr. G. Worboys was the committeeman in charge, and he and the team unite in putting this down as one of their pleasantest outings.

The other Southern League matches on Saturday were those between Reading and Clapton, which the latter were lucky in winning by two goals to one, and Royal Ordnance and Chatham, which was drawn, nothing being scored on either side. The following is League table up to date:—