

THE SOUTHERN LEAGUE.

LUTON TOWN v. READING.

Played at Reading on Saturday. Result:—

Luton Town 3 goals.
Reading nil.

The teams were as follow:—

RIGHT.		LUTON TOWN.		LEFT.	
		Russell (goal).			
		McCartney.		McEwen.	
	Watkins.		Stewart.		Docherty.
Birch.	Coupar.		Galbraith.		Parkinson. Ekins'
○					
	Wheeler.	Cunningham.	Reid.	Marshall.	Gray.
	Knight.		Evans.		White.
		Justins.		Bach.	
			Cannon (goal).		
LEFT		READING.		RIGHT.	

Referee, Mr. T. D. Crisp; linesmen, Messrs. E. Walsh (Luton) and J. George (Reading).

"Bravo, Reading! Here's more power to your elbow! To beat Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders by 7 goals to 2 was really a fine performance. Yes, the 'Biscuit Boys' are going great guns just now, for support of which statement I would respectfully ask readers to glance at page 3 to see what Reading did with Luton to-day in the Southern League struggle. I am well aware that most people anticipated a soft thing for the 'Men of Straw,' but I think the result will come as a bit more than a mild surprise."

Kindly allow me, dear reader, to at once say that the responsibility for the above paragraph is not mine. The observations do not emanate from this quarter of the globe at all; they are simply the ratiocinations of a Reading scribe, penned before Saturday's match, and are here quoted as an awful example of the danger which besets the path of the football prophet.

Of course, no one but a Reading enthusiast—and perhaps the *M.L.*—would have indulged in such sentiments, but from what I could gather at the biscuit town the people there were firmly persuaded that after beating Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders by seven goals to two, the Reading team were equal to licking creation generally, and Luton Town in particular.

Poor Reading! They would have dearly loved a win on Saturday, and nothing but the perversity of the Reds prevented them from having it. As a matter of fact, Reading could not have wished for a better chance than they had on this occasion; everything seemed to favour them. Gallacher's inability to play was an awful blow to the Luton team. It appears that the right-winger got "jumped on" twice towards the end of Wednesday's match, sustaining injury to the ankle.

Then when the Lutonians arrived at Reading, it was found that proper arrangements had not been made in regard to the commissariat department. The team went to an hotel to dinner, and after waiting patiently for three-quarters of an hour it was found the meat had not arrived from the butcher's. An adjournment was therefore made to a neighbouring restaurant, where, an hour or so before the match, the players regaled themselves with such capital aids to football as stewed steak and apple pudding.

I really think it is a great mistake on the part of the committee, when the team are going out, not to make arrangements for their accommodation beforehand. By getting a bill-of-fare and making stipulations as to time and price, they would not only avoid a lot of inconvenience but would almost certainly be money in pocket.

The match was played on the old ground at Caversham, and the pitch was in very good condition. But the exceptionally high wind which prevailed was all in favour of Reading, as it rendered combination practically impossible. This, in conjunction with the other circumstances referred to, made the issue a much more open question than it otherwise would have been.

Go where they will, Luton are bound to draw a big crowd, and the gate at Reading on Saturday beat all previous records. There were fully four thousand persons present when the kick-off took place. And what a lot they were, too. Not quite so demonstrative as last year perhaps, taking the game all through, but still a long, long way behind those steady-going, in-offensive, and lamb-like creatures, who once adorned the Dunstable-road enclosure.

The spectators repeatedly encroached on the field of play, the game having to be stopped several times in order to clear them off. And then at the end the referee, who had done his duty without fear or favour, and who deserved every credit for his plucky behaviour in face of a hostile crowd, was mobbed, though fortunately not actually assaulted.

It is a great misfortune for a Club when its supporters sacrifice sport for partisanship, and deliberately refuse to see any faults in their own pets. This unhappily is the case to a great degree with the followers of all football teams, but the Reading people go the whole hog, or, to use a more appropriate phrase, it may be said they fairly "take the biscuit."

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What particularly raised their ire on Saturday was a penalty kick given in favour of Luton. But what other decision Mr. Crisp, whom, by the way, Luton had never seen before, could have come to, it is difficult to see. Evans, the Reading centre-half, had evidently been told off to mark Galbraith, and very spitefully he did mark him, too. At last, he set a back for him within the twelve yards line, and the wonder was that Galbraith did not break his neck in going over him, as he turned a complete somersault.

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Skelton's Football Boots are all made on the premises and are guaranteed to give perfect satisfaction to wearers. They are a special study for the season.—
ADVT.]

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The kick-off took place soon after half-past two. Luton won the toss, and had some slight advantage from the wind, which, however, blew almost directly across the ground. The Reds were the first to get dangerous, Galbraith and Watkins showing up in the attack, but off-side against Ekins nullified the effort. The homesters responded, and Gray got the ball in the net, but the whistle had previously sounded for off-side.

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Then there was a diversion. A good-sized dog—why on earth people bring dogs to football matches as always been a puzzle to me—appeared on the scene and took a prominent part in a lively piece of play in mid-field, eventually showing such an anxiety to get on the ball that the referee had to stop play and order the offender off the field. Whether or not he will be reported to the Association, I cannot say.

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When play was resumed, it partook of a somewhat scrambling nature, the most exciting moments ensuing upon a couple of well-placed free kicks by McCartney, and Parkinson and Galbraith got in good shots, both of which were a little too high. The biscuit boys responded, and Cunningham skimmed the bar with a beauty.

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Luton now had two corners, the first given by Cannon to a splendid shot by Parkinson, but nothing came of them. Reading retaliating, Russell had an opportunity of distinguishing himself, and distinguish himself he did, saving twice in succession in really grand style, first from the left wing and then from the right.

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The Reds thus put on their mettle a bit, made determined attempts to score, and Cannon, after resisting some very hot shots, at length succumbed in the easiest fashion to a long 'un from Parkinson. It was undoubtedly a beautiful shot, but as it was put in at about 50 yards' range, no one expected it to be successful. Cannon, however, was fairly caught napping.

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Directly after this Galbraith and Coupar got quite clear of the backs, but Cannon rushed out and dispossessed them, while a moment later Russell at the other end, did an exactly similar thing when it seemed that there was nothing to prevent Gray from opening an account for Reading. Half-time was called soon afterwards, with Luton still leading by a goal to nil, a state of affairs which Reading regarded as very satisfactory.

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With the wind in their favour the spectators thought their favourites had a very good chance, and great was the disappointment when Luton were found to be showing much improved form. Immediately the restart was made, the Reds got together better than at any previous period, and Ekins, receiving from the right, shot just over the bar.

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Reading made spirited attempts to equalise, and McEwen and McCartney found an opportunity of showing their abilities. Luton again made overtures, and a lovely shot by Galbraith was tipped out of danger by Cannon. Ekins placed beautifully from the flag-staff, but ultimately the home team succeeded in effecting a clearance.

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Reading got away now and again, but the bulk of the pressing was done by Luton, and after Galbraith had once come very near scoring with an overhead kick, the ball landing on the net, there occurred the unpleasant incident to which attention has already been called. Evans put Galbraith through an acrobatic performance, and from the penalty kick given, Coupar registered a second goal in the neatest style possible.

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The spectators didn't like it a little bit, and shouted and hooted at the referee, who, however, did not, as so many officials do, allow the hostile demonstration to influence his subsequent decisions. A penalty kick is never a very welcome feature in a game, but all the same for that, it is sometimes a necessary evil, and it was so on Saturday.

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Urged on by the frantic shouts of their supporters, the "Biscuitiers" made desperate efforts to avenge themselves and Back got in a shot.

was placed in jeopardy by a foul against Coupar. Justins placed, but Birch headed away, and Ekins went to the other end, where a good chance was cleared by Evans.

Luton were on the aggressive again almost directly, and we were then treated to the finest effort of the day. Ekins received the ball, and racing away in grand style, put in a brilliant centre, Birch rushing up in the nick of time and heading a beautiful goal. It was the climax. There was no more hope for Reading, and the people realising this, at once began to wend their weary way homewards. Another proof, if one were wanted, that crowds go not so much to see football, as to see their own side win.

The Luton team now, for the most part, simply acted on the defensive. Coupar had for a long time dropped back among the halves, and had done much useful work there. The homesters struggled on right up to the end, but they seldom got by the backs, and when they did, Russell was ready to receive them.

Thus the game ended in a win for Luton by three goals to nil, a performance which must be regarded as a very meritorious one. Indeed, "Rover" in the *Morning Leader*, says "if he were asked to name the best performance in the Southern League up to date, he should unhesitatingly point to the win of Luton over Reading."

Had the conditions been more favourable to good football, I believe the victory would have been more decisive still. The strong wind was a great advantage to a team like Reading, as it completely upset combination, the quality upon which Luton rely almost entirely for their success.

But apart from combination altogether, Luton are man for man a long way in advance of Reading. The biscuit boys are really not nearly so good a lot as they ought to be, considering the population of the town and the almost unlimited gates which the Club should be in a position to command.

In the first half, Luton played a very indifferent game, though that of course was more their misfortune than their fault. It was during this period that the Reading team showed to most advantage, and their forwards perhaps kept together better than ours. In the second half, however, there was no doubt which were the cleverer lot, the form exhibited by Luton being much superior to anything on the other side.

Wheeler, as usual, quite failed to shine against Luton, but the other forwards were a considerable improvement on those who visited Luton, the right wing especially doing a lot of good work. Gray, however, was very much inclined to try the off-side game, and the spectators took it very badly when he was promptly pulled up by the referee.

The halves were a hard-working trio, but Evans, perhaps the best of the three, quite marred his display by the vindictiveness shown towards Galbraith. The backs did pretty well, but although they are thought a great deal of at Reading, they are not a patch on the Luton pair. Cannon, in goal, did well, with the one exception previously referred to.

As to the Luton team, Ekins and Parkinson did splendidly on the left, Galbraith worked like a Trojan in the centre, and Coupar and Birch acquitted themselves capitally on the right. There's no mistake about it, Birch is an exceedingly useful man.

The halves suffered considerably from the eccentric movements of the ball, but they nevertheless did some first-rate work, and the backs played a clinking game, both of them getting some nice and nasty things said about them as they repeatedly frustrated the intentions of the Reading forwards. Russell in goal was a gem. He saved splendidly all through, but his best performances were when he saved at close quarters, first from the left and then from the right, and when he ran out and took the ball off Gray's toe, just as the man was going to shoot.

Now's the time before you get a cold. Place your order for an overcoat with S. Bassett, 28, Wellington-street. The cheapest tailor in Lu... Style and finish second to none; see my patterns and prices before ordering your Overcoats, Suits, and Trousers elsewhere.—[ADVT].

Millwall had all their work cut out at Maze-hill, just scraping home against the Ordnance by a goal to nil, and Southampton St. Mary's beat Ilford to the same tune on the Ilford ground. The Southern League table now stands as follows:—