

THE SOUTHERN LEAGUE.

LUTON TOWN v. SWINDON.

Played at Swindon on Saturday. Result : -

Luton Town	2 goals.
Swindon	nil.

The teams were as follow :—

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RIGHT.	LUTON TOWN.			LEFT.
	Williams (goal).			
	McCartney.		McEwen.	*
Watkins.		Stewart.		Docherty.
Gallacher.	Coupar.	Birch.	Parkinson.	Elkins
O				
Hayward.	Jones.	Sutherland.	Wright	Hames.
	Davies.	Munro.	Hopewell.	
	Richardson.		Dibsdall.	

Williams (goal).

LEFT	SWINDON.	RIGHT.
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Referee, Mr. T. W. Saywell; linesmen, Messrs. T. Allen (Swindon), and E. A. Barford (Luton).

Great Show of Winter Goods, new Ties, Hats, Shirts, Gloves, Mufflers, Umbrellas, Underwear, Golf Hose, Half Hose, Overcoats, Coats and Vests and Trousers. Prices to defy all competition. — S. Bassett, The Outfitter, 28, Wellington-street.—[ADVT.]

So Luton have once again succeeded in accomplishing the task which proved too much for Millwall. The latter could only make a draw of it with the Swindonians at one goal all, but Luton beat the railway lads by two to nil, and had the circumstances under which the match was played been a little more favourable to good football, Luton's score in all probability would have been considerably larger.

The game was a surprise to the Wiltshire people. They assembled on the County Ground for the express purpose of seeing the local men win. "I think our fellows will just about nobble 'em," said one of the spectators before the proceedings commenced, and that seemed to be the prevailing opinion, if, as I interpreted it, the phrase meant that the Swindon men would just about manage to get home, or in other words win.

And there was some reason for the confidence, too, seeing that the Swindonians had not been beaten on their own ground this season. The Dockers are credited with having made a draw with them, but according to local opinion Swindon won the match fairly and squarely, and the allusions to the gentleman who had the honour of refereeing on that occasion are not of the most complimentary character.

Once, away from home, Swindon, by one of those strange vagaries of fortune which beset the path of a football team, had succumbed to a much inferior eleven, Uxbridge to wit, but that was their only downfall this season. Therefore the local enthusiasts had fairly good ground for pinning their faith to their pets, though had they had the privilege of seeing Luton in their best mood their hopes would scarcely have run so high.

Said Swindon to Luton, you come to meet us,
And we feel pretty sure you will rue it;
Said Luton to Swindon, you'll try to beat us,
But we feel pretty sure you won't do it.

But, of course, Luton were considerably handicapped on Saturday. A journey of a hundred miles, a portion of it on the underground railway, is not the best preparation for football, but I will give the Reds credit for studiously avoiding anything which might tend to make them unfit. When you find men to whom a smoke is a luxury voluntarily foregoing the pleasure in order to keep in the best condition possible, I think it shows that their heart is in the game, and that it is not all a question of filthy lucre, as the opponents of professionalism would have us believe.

But not only was the journey against Luton; the condition of the ground was dead against scientific play. Swindon had had its full share of rain, and though it was fortunate enough to escape on Saturday, the soil was thoroughly saturated, and in one or two places on the pitch on which the match was played, the water stood in pools.

And the longer the game went on the worse the ground became. Luton probably saw that this would be the case, and they accordingly went off at full tilt directly Mr. Saywell gave the signal to commence operations. It wanted a minute to half-past two, the advertised time, when the ball was set in motion, and the spectators then mustered between two and three thousand.

The enthusiasm at the beginning was very great, and if cheering would have done it, the victory of the homesters would have been assured. But Luton went about their work in a business-like fashion, and kept it up throughout the whole of the first forty-five minutes, their combination and smartness evoking applause even from those who came to scoff.

It was in the initial half of the game that the match was won. The Reds not only displayed wonderful quickness in getting on the ball, but they passed it from one to another with a precision which quite nonplussed their opponents, whose energetic efforts were frequently thrown away. Gallacher and Coupar especially were altogether too much for the Swindon defence, whereas the most dangerous man on the other side—Sutherland—generally had his attempts nipped in the bud by Stewart.

The best value for money is to be obtained at Skelton and Son's, The Leather Boot Makers, 31, Wellington-street, Luton.—[ADVT.]

To satisfy those of my friends who have a passionate love for details, I may say that Swindon won the toss and took advantage of the wind and sun. Yes, I am not joking. We actually had the sun at Swindon, and as there was good reason for believing it to be the same sun which, at a certain remote period, beamed upon Luton, I naturally felt something like the same joy in his presence as the antiquary experiences when he discovers the relic of a past age.

Fouls against Birch and Munro were the first incidents of note, and from the latter McCartney placed, and Ekins transferring to Parkinson, that player got in a clipping shot, to which the Swindon Williams was compelled to give a corner. Ekins took the kick, and judging it to a nicety, the ball was kept bobbing about almost under the cross-bar, but at last the besieged got a little relief, and Gallacher then sent wide. After the homesters had failed to improve upon a foul against McCartney, Coupar showed perhaps the trickiest piece of individual play of the day, but his shot went wide of the mark.

A minute or two later, Gallacher worked his way to the centre and put in a shot which the custodian saved, and then Stuart gave Parkinson a capital opening, but the attempt was a tame one, and was easily repulsed. A clever piece of tackling by McEwen, Sutherland being the victim, was actually applauded by the spectators, who, however, never could reconcile themselves to McCartney. The latter's size was against him, and they seemed to think he was taking an unfair advantage when he kicked the ball—and his kicks were kicks, and no mistake.

Parkinson having neutralised a smart bit of work by the right wing by getting off-side, made ample atonement almost immediately. Stewart passed to Birch, who handed on to Parkinson, and the latter completely beat the Swindon goal-keeper with a magnificent shot. This was eleven minutes from the kick-off.

Not a sound was heard, no encouraging shout,
As the ball to the centre was hurried,
But the people around were they sadly put out,
And their pets wore a look they call worried.

Gallacher and Coupar next menaced the Swindon headquarters, but they were beaten off, and the locals were afforded a chance by hands against Stewart at the other end. The ball was dropped nicely in the mouth of the Luton goal, but the Reds cleared, and danger from a foul against Ekins was averted by Sutherland getting off-side.

Luton retaliated, and Parkinson having just missed the bull's-eye from a grand centre by Gallacher, the Reds made another attack, and Williams and the backs misunderstanding each other, Birch profited thereby and scored goal number two with a smart, low shot. Birch has scored every time he has played forward, and he did not mean to spoil his record on this occasion.

Luton going away from the re-start, Birch got clear and had a splendid opening, but instead of shooting he passed to Parkinson, who was promptly ruled off-side. Swindon responded on the left, and McCartney making a dash and missing, Hayward was soon in dangerous proximity to the Luton goal, but Stewart rushed up in the nick of time and spoiled the shot. The homesters again became threatening, and Jones had a good opening, but McCartney this time came to the rescue and cleared beautifully.

A lovely centre by Gallacher was the means of placing the Swindon citadel in jeopardy several times, and after Stewart had had two shots and Watkins one, Ekins hit the post with a clinker. "Their forwards are so clever," exclaimed a gentleman standing near me, and there's no mistake about it, the Luton quintette are an exceedingly clever lot. I have not yet seen their equals in the South.

The Reds continued to have all the best of the play up to half-time, but both goals experienced narrow escapes, the Swindonians missing no chance of cultivating the acquaintance of Luton's new goalkeeper. Jones once left alone, sent in a fine shot, which Williams carefully watched round the post, and Hayward hit the corner of the goal with a beauty.

On the other hand Luton again and again got on visiting terms with the Swindon Williams, but that gentleman defended his charge with great vigour. The closest squeak of all was when Birch got quite and found himself with no one to beat but th

custodian. The Luton centre forward dribbled to within about half-a-dozen yards, and then put in an oblique shot along the ground. It seemed that nothing could prevent it finding the net, but Williams threw himself full stretch across the goal, with arm extended, and just succeeded in diverting the course of the ball. It was a grand save, but whether it was due to luck or judgment it would be difficult to say. A good many inclined to the belief that Williams slipped.

The interval arrived with the score standing at two to nil in favour of Luton, and when play was resumed it looked for all the world as though the Reds were going to pile it on. They went away at a tangent, and Docherty got in two shots, one from a free kick and one directly after. Then a fine centre by Ekins gave Gallacher a splendid chance, but the right winger missed the ball altogether.

After this, the play fell off considerably, as regards science, though the vigour was maintained to the end, the game, bearing in mind the state of the ground, being wonderfully fast all through. Every man was a trier, and when the whistle blew for time there was no appreciable sign of energy flagging on either side.

This, surely, was a testimony to the importance attached to the match, for nothing but downright enthusiasm could have kept the men going at it ding-dong for the whole ninety minutes on such sloppy, slippery soil. As I have said, the play during this portion of the proceedings was not scientific, but it was never tame.

There was a lot of rushing and plenty of long kicking, and fortune varied considerably, the ball being first at one end, and then at the other. I think I am not exaggerating in saying that Luton were always the better team, but at the same time the play was much more evenly distributed than in the first half.

A corner for Swindon, the result of a capital shot by Wright, was replied to by one forced by Ekins off Dibsdall, and then came a grave misfortune, Watkins fouling Hayward within the twelve yards line, and Mr. Saywell awarding the home team a penalty kick. This was undertaken by Sutherland, but to the great relief of the Lutonians their custodian, who had taken his stand midway between the ball and the goal, saved the shot.

Whether the foul was a deliberate one or not, it is not for me to decide. Watkins says it was purely unintentional, but it certainly had not that appearance, and therefore Mr. Saywell took the only course open to him. But the incident served to show that the rule regarding the penalty kick may work very harshly. The foul took place near the touch-line, and consequently it seemed rather hard to bring the ball from there to the mouth of goal.

Although disappointed with the result of their penalty kick, Swindon again took up the attack, and from a corner well placed by Hames, Wright headed in. We all expected to hear a shout go up for goal, and it was a surprise to find that Williams had been equal to the occasion.

These were the best of Swindon's opportunities, but Luton subsequently came quite as near scoring. McEwen shaved the upright with a long shot, and Gallacher just missed the corner, while Parkinson, receiving from Birch, landed the ball in the net, but not before the whistle had sounded for off-side. A little later a miskick by Richardson gave Parkinson an easy chance, but that young man took a long shot and sent wide, instead of dribbling close into goal. Luton were still pressing, and Docherty was about to take a shot at the target, when Mr. Saywell called time, and Luton were left the winners of a tough game by two goals to nil.

It was a disappointment to the spectators, but while a few of them were foolish enough to express their feelings in a childish manner, a great many generously cheered Luton as they left the field, recognising that though Swindon had lost they had lost to a better team.

Indeed, it was very freely stated that Luton are a better team than Millwall, an opinion in which I heartily concur, and many a wish was expressed that the Reds would come off victorious in next Saturday's encounter. And so they will, if they only keep their heads and play the game that they did against Swindon in the first half. That could be improved upon, but not much.

It could be improved upon by the left wing showing a little more combination. Parkinson should pass more freely to his partner, and should remember that no man can take a long pass forward better than Ekins. Occasionally, the two of them did some smart and clever things in combination on Saturday, and what they can do occasionally they can do always—bar accidents. Now, Bob, do try and bear this in mind against the Dockers.

Birch played a very decent game in centre, but suffered in the second half from the earlier attentions of Munro, a fact to which his legs bore ample witness. Gallacher and Coupar did splendid service, their passing being as good as ever, but unhappily Coupar, about a quarter of an hour from the finish, got injured, and though he pluckily kept on playing to the finish, he was very bad afterwards. Whether it was a kick, or a twist of the knee, I cannot say, but his condition on Saturday night was such as not to augur well for his appearance against Millwall. Just our luck!

Stewart was admitted on all hands to be the best half-back on the field, and the care he took of Sutherland was very creditable to him. Docherty likewise played a capital game, and the same can be said of Watkins, but the latter will never attain perfection while he tries to out-manoeuvre a man instead of tackling him at once. He should also not forget that it is impossible, or generally impossible, to kick too hard when in the vicinity of his own goal. Improvement in these respects is all that is required to make Watkins a half-back of the first class.

McEwen and McCartney were all that could be desired at back, both of them playing in champion form, and Williams came out of the ordeal with great credit. I watched him very closely, and was delighted with the cool way in which he did his business. There was practically not a shot which he did not cover, and though several grazed the posts and the bar, he never lost sight of one of them until it was out of danger.

The Swindonians are a very good lot indeed, and I am not surprised at the position they have won for themselves in the league. I should say they are not quite as good as Southampton St. Mary's but a trifle better than Reading. Sutherland is a long way the best man in the team, being a speedy and clever forward, but the other members of the front string are not at all bad. The half-backs are strong and vigorous tacklers, but do not play to their forwards in the same way that the Luton halves do. Dibsdall is a good back, and I have seen many worse goal-keepers than Williams.

A word of praise is due to Mr. Saywell for the admirable way in which he discharged his duties. He inclined neither to the one side nor the other, was immediately down on any rough play, and he interpreted the offside rule in a manner which some of his fellow referees would do well to study. Both teams expressed their satisfaction with his performance, and even the spectators found nothing to grumble about.

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 Luton. Style and finish second to none; see my patterns and prices before ordering your Overcoats, Suits, and Trousers elsewhere.—[ADVT].

The other Southern League matches furnished no surprise, if we except the tremendous whacking which Millwall gave Clapton. Really, I can't understand it. Clapton seem to be doing their best to play into the hands of Millwall. Last year the team they took to East Ferry-road was one which even St. Albans would be inclined to sneeze at, and on Saturday they took another just as bad. Welham, Mayes, Milton, and Hughes were absentees, and as to the majority of those who did play, goodness only knows where they were raked up. The eleven goals to one beating was only what might have been expected under the circumstances. A pretty object lesson in amateurism, truly!

New Brompton on their own ground just managed to beat the Soton Saints by a goal to nil, but Reading at home rubbed it into the Royal Ordnance to the tune of five goals to two, the majority of Reading's points being obtained in the last twenty minutes. The following is the League table up to date:—

	Goals							
	Pld.	Won.	Lost.	Drawn.	For.	Agst.	Pts.	
Millwall Athletic..	8	7	0	1	32	6	15	
Luton Town.....	7	5	2	0	22	6	10	
New Brompton....	7	4	1	2	9	10	10	
Swindon Town....	5	3	1	1	10	8	7	
Chatham	5	3	1	1	14	11	7	
Reading	7	3	4	0	13	10	6	
Sou'pton St. Mary's	8	3	5	0	11	18	6	
Royal Ordnance ..	7	1	5	1	9	16	3	
Clapton	6	1	5	0	15	29	2	
Ilford	6	0	6	0	1	14	0	