

LUTON SECURE LEAGUE POINTS.

SWINDON BEATEN AT HOME.

SOME EXCELLENT PLAY.

As time goes on interest in the Southern League matches increases, for there is even yet a chance of Luton being able to head the list. It was agreed that the "reds" had a difficult task on hand when they set out to Swindon on Saturday, for the railway-men had not hitherto been beaten this season. Of course the terrible drubbing by Uxbridge on the Saturday previous was borne in mind; but it was also remembered that the encounter was an English Cup tie—a fact which accounts for a great deal. The Wiltshire men had not bitten the dust in the League contest, though they had entertained the renowned Millwallians; the outcome of that meeting was a draw. The Lutonians made no mistake on Saturday. They played a winning game throughout, and though the total was but a brace of goals that will be accepted as showing the difference in calibre between the teams.

The Lutonians set out by the 9.5 express on the Midland Railway, a saloon having been attached for their convenience. There were but few outsiders present, the length and costliness of the journey doubtless acting as a deterrent. Arriving at Paddington the members of the team were provided with a hot meal, and thus the necessity for hunting about for accommodation at Swindon was avoided. Not only was the step a wise one in this particular but, inasmuch as the destination was not to be reached until an hour or so before the time fixed for commencing play, in the sense of training the precaution was rendered requisite. The Great Western Company emulated the example of the Midland and rendered the players and their companions comfortable by the provision of a fine saloon. Thus the journey was rendered as free from tedium as possible, and when the eleven combatants reached their destination they were as fit as the fiddle which is always dragged in for purposes of comparison—though why the writer is unable to determine. It should be said at this stage, perhaps, that Galbraith travelled with the team as twelfth man, the injury to his foot rendering it inadvisable for him to don his colours unless in an emergency. During the journey a note was passed round in which an anonymous correspondent had expressed best wishes for the side's success and conveyed hints as to the dexterity or otherwise of the home contingent. All things have an ending, and so in due time the small band of admirers from straw-town found themselves on the scene of operations. Some had been unwary enough to trudge round the highway and they carried away samples of some of the thickest mud with which one could be plastered. Others had made use of a pathway by the canal and these were wise in their generation—so wise, indeed, that the unwary ones were glad enough to accept their advice when the match had been finished.

The scene of the encounter was the county ground, and a splendidly laid-out pitch it is. There are cricket and football grounds with a capital cycle track, and the conveniences are all that could be desired. Save in one respect! The accommodation for Press representatives was execrable. What are one table and three chairs amongst a crowd? The Bedfordshire Fourth Estate men contented themselves with positions outside the wires and near the centre-line, and here a good view of the game was obtained. Long before the time fixed for commencing spectators began to assemble, and when the signal was given there must have been close upon 3,000 present. It was a strong-lunged crowd: but more of that hereafter. The referee was Mr. T. W. Saywell and he was heartily cheered, his presence apparently being as acceptable to the Swindonians as it was to the travellers from Luton. In good time Mr. Saywell took charge of the following sides:—

Swindon: Goal, Williams; backs, Dibsdall and Richardson; half-backs, Hopewell, Munro, and Davies; forwards, Haines and Wright (right), Sutherland (centre), Jones and Hayward (left).

Luton: Goal, Williams; backs, McCartney and McEwen; half-backs, Watkins, Stewart, and Docherty (captain); forwards, Gallacher and Coupar (right), Birch (centre), Parkinson and Ekins (left).

Linesmen, Messrs. T. Allen (Swindon) and E. A. Barford (Luton).

The home side won the toss, which rendered it necessary for the Luton men to start against the wind. There was plenty of excitement when the game began and this increased as the afternoon wore on, the onlookers following the game with evident interest. It was noticed early, too, that the ground was saturated with wet and this not only tried the players but rendered the ball greasy. Fortunately the weather remained fine throughout, and towards the end of the first portion the visitors had the sun glaringly in their eyes. For a minute or two after the start by Birch play was confined to mid-field, neither lot seeming to be able to make much headway. The strangers' centre forward was punished for fouling; but the free kick which followed was not of much avail to the Swindon men, for a like offence by Munro brought about the return of the "reds." McCartney placed admirably from the free-kick and Parkinson sent in extremely well, the ball being got away with difficulty. Stewart was already showing up prominently, the home forwards being afforded an exhibition of what he is capable of doing when occasion demands it. Ekins sent in a hot one and the custodian saved finely; he was lying at full length along the line when he managed to steer the ball round the post. The corner which accrued was not profitable, the clearance which was effected by the home side being especially smart. Gallacher essayed a long one which travelled over the line, and then McCartney was lavishly hooted for a sample of weight utilisation, Mr. Saywell deciding that this was unlawful. It had already been borne in upon one that the "moonrakers" can shout, and the plainly expressed opinions regarding McCartney proved conclusively that many are adepts in using the "vulgar tongue." Ekins was heavily floored, the crowd chuckling hugely over his downfall; but the outside left man had his revenge later on, when he managed to give several proofs of his speediness. Coupar was applauded for a particularly neat dodging exhibition in mid-field; but his finishing shot went laughably wide. McEwen gained approbation by some remarkably fine kicking, and thereafter Birch was a second time pulled up for fouling. In heading away from the free kick McEwen conceded a corner, which did not avail the locals much. Gallacher sent in splendidly only to see Birch miss, and the right-winger next lodged the ball in Williams's arms with a long effort. Some "rocky" play on the right led to the ball going out, and subsequently Parkinson was responsible for a wild attempt at scoring. McEwen deserved applause for pulling up Sutherland smartly; but he did not get it, the bulk of the onlookers sympathising with the home centre man. Parkinson, when near goal, was adjudged to be off-side, and a little later the Swindon Williams saved brilliantly from the Luton forwards. Play had been in progress some 10 minutes when Parkinson, receiving from Birch, lowered the Swindon colours, the shot being a beauty. When hands had been awarded against the Swindon men they were stopped for getting off side. Despite the blowing of the whistle the leather was taken down and sent through, and some of the spectators were ridiculous enough to aver that the point was a genuine one! At the other end Gallacher sent right across the goal, and a minute or two afterwards he sent over after having captured the leather cleverly. Hands against Docherty was the next point of note, the visiting captain hauling the ball down amid great laughter. Stewart was fouled by the home right half with the usual result; but the account was balanced by a free-kick against Luton for Coupar handling. This led to a smart attack by the homesters, and McCartney distinguished himself by some fine play in front of goal. At one stage McEwen missed and the other "Mac" stepped in in the nick of time. Some tumbling about took place hereabouts, four men measuring their length at one time. Swindon, when they had advanced into close proximity of Williams's charge, were decided to have broken the off-side rule, and shortly after Gallacher centred neatly, the chance not being accepted. Swindon got down on their left wing in good style; but McCartney executed a war-dance in front of the attacking forwards which amused the onlookers and evidently flustered the players. Birch scored a grand goal thereafter; he passed forward sharply and before the defenders could secure the ball he had re-obtained it and buried it in the net. Following this second success the "reds" pressed determinedly and they came close to scoring again soon, Birch passing to Parkinson when the latter was standing off-side. Hayward became conspicuous at the Luton end with a "shot that failed," and McCartney was deservedly applauded for a particularly smart bit of defensive work. Stewart initiated a strong attack by sending in well, and Watkins eventually raised the siege by sending behind. Ekins experienced terribly hard luck, the ball striking the post with a resounding thud and bouncing away into play. Hayward once more did well in the field; but his final effort was tame. McCartney was afforded more opportunities of rendering himself conspicuous and he accepted them all, his display being superb. Even the malcontents amongst the spectators were led to commend him—and footballers will understand what that betokened. The homesters pressed determinedly for a space, and this period was filled up by some excellent work by the "whites." The outside left man on one occasion struck the post with a shot that seemed likely to score—though it should be added that William was on the alert. Following hands against the "reds" Birch broke away and shot grandly, the save which Williams effected being the finest in the game. Both men thoroughly deserved the applause which burst forth. The resultant corner was unproductive. Watkins had a shy at goal; but the less said of it the better. Gallacher was responsible for another admirable effort, his final shot being deserving of better luck than attended it. Birch steered just over the bar, and McCartney cleared well when a foul had been awarded against his side. The whole of the visitors' forwards showed up prominently afterwards, and the home custodian was called upon to negotiate some good attempts. Nothing more was scored, however, and at half-time the totals were:

LUTON, TWO; SWINDON, NONE.

In the second moiety Ekins early rendered himself noticeable by centring beautifully. Gallacher just

failing to reach the leather. Sutherland, who had been doing some very useful work for the homesters, got away and dispatched a good attempt at the leaders' goal. Wright emulated this example, the outcome being a corner conceded by Williams. Parkinson was punished for foul tactics. The exchanges were not hereabouts characterised by the same brilliancy that had been noticed before the interval; in fact, at no time did either side equal the high standard of play which was attained in the first half. The "reds" passed somewhat carelessly at times, the home defenders being on these occasions able to reach the ball with ease. Following a further foul by Parkinson Ekins forced a corner, and a struggle took place in the neighbourhood of the home goal, the danger being ultimately averted. Again Luton returned to the attack, though with just as little result. McEwen was prominent in a struggle at the other end, and just after his partner was also afforded some work. An incident happened just now which was fraught with extreme danger to Luton. Watkins fouled an opponent, and when it was ascertained that it was within the 12 yards mark the dismay of the "reds" and their supporters was unbounded. A penalty kick was awarded and Sutherland was deputed to take it. He kicked straight at Williams, who saved magnificently, and the Luton custodian behaved equally well immediately after. When Stewart had troubled the Swindon keeper with a fast long one, Sutherland once more broke away, the result being a corner, from which Williams made another grand save. Both sides broke the off-side rule, and subsequently Coupar was injured. In the operations that followed the home forwards gave a good display and many times they looked like increasing the lead. Nothing farther was scored and thus the Lutonians became the first Southern League team to beat Swindon with the following totals:

LUTON, TWO; SWINDON, NONE.