

SOUTHERN LEAGUE.

LUTON V. SWINDON.

SHUNTED SWINDON SIGNAL "POINTS CLEAR" FOR LUTON'S CONQUERING CAREER.

It was a critical day. Nay, the turning-point in Luton's struggle for the Southern League championship—hence the exceptionally high value South Bedfordshire footballers attached to the two points put up for competition in the Great Western Railway centre on Saturday.

A win at Swindon, and sweet revenge the week following at Millwall's expense, everyone recognised after our successful trip to Reading, would once more threaten seriously the Dockers' vaunted supremacy in the Southern League. Well, the Reds could not have done better down in Wiltshire, especially as Millwall were fortunate in coming away with a draw. They have only to pull off the other half of the task before them to-morrow, and Luton will be in the seventh heaven of delight.

Mr. G. Worboys was in charge of the team, and everything was managed so well that the long journey was really a pleasant outing. The party left Luton at 9.5, and arrangements were made for dinner at Paddington, before the 11.45 express, our destination being reached after a straight run of an hour and a half in a fine saloon. The day was dull and cloudy, and it was clear Jove's watering-pots had bestowed equally copious showers at Swindon as at Luton the previous day.

The new County ground was the scene of operations—an extensive enclosure with an elaborately banked-up cycle-track, the football pitch being the circular grass plot in the centre. There is a big grand stand, but it is fitted to the track—close enough for sports, but 40 yards away from football. The weather was very unfavourable to the "gate," but the crowd numbered 2,500. I was told that Millwall attracted half as many again.

To come to the teams, Galbraith enlivened us with his company, but he was not playing, as his ankle is still troublesome. Otherwise, Luton had full strength. Swindon also put their best eleven into the field, the 22 men being as under:—

Luton:—Williams, goal; McCartney and McEwen, backs; Watkins, Stewart and Docherty, halves; Gallacher, Coupar, Birch, Parkinson and Ekins, forwards.

Swindon:—C. Williams, goal; Dibsall and Richardson, backs; Hopewell, Munro, and Davies, halves; Hames and Wright, right; Sutherland, centre; Jones and Hayward, left, forwards.

The referee was Mr. T. W. Saywell (Chatham); Messrs. T. Allen and E. A. Barford were linesmen.

An early start being advisable owing to the rapidly shortening days, Mr. Saywell gave the signal at 2.29, when Birch kicked off against a cross-wind. The ground was very soft and wet, and it took a few minutes before the visitors got their feet. The first incidents were fouls against Birch and Davies, which showed that the referee meant business. Parkinson put in from McCartney's place-kick, but the backs cleared. Stewart sent up again and Ekins tried a beauty, which the Swindon goal-keeper just kept out at the expense of a corner. Some exciting head-work followed in front of the home citadel, but Gallacher finished off this first assault by centring behind.

There was some shouting when McCartney fouled Jones, the local pet, but the ball was well got away, and then we were admiring some very tricky play by Coupar, the home defence being let off with a goal-kick. The Swindon custodian was soon troubled again, having to kick away from Gallacher. It seemed as if the railway men had a chance when a mild foul was given against Birch, and McEwen, heading the wrong way, yielded a corner. The flag-kick, however, also went wrong, and Luton at once transferred play to the other end. Gallacher became conspicuous for clever work, Williams clearing once more, and Parkinson lost an opportunity by hesitating to shoot.

The Swindon forwards could make no head-way at all, and McEwen brought Sutherland to a dead stop, when nearly clear. Then Coupar crossed to the left, where Parkinson was ready to do the needful, but was ruled offside. Directly afterwards, however, Luton returned to the attack, and Birch passing to "Parkie," Bob made no mistake, scoring Luton's first goal in fine style. It was a fast, high shot, which, I am sure, Williams never saw.

Only 11 minutes had elapsed when Luton got the lead, and this made the play faster than ever. Mr. Saywell blew his whistle six times in a few minutes, twice for infringements of the offside rule by the home team. Gallacher put in a couple of dangerous centres, and the Swindon defence had warm times. At last, Hayward broke away, and would he score? Well, McCartney was in the way, and so distracted the left-winger by some piston-rod, spread-eagle, arm movements, that the poor young man shot hopelessly wide. From the goal-kick. Luton made a determined onset, and a smart dash by Birch completely "flabbergasted" the backs—result, goal No. 2 for Luton, within 10 minutes of the first.

This was another unstoppable shot, and Swindon folk began to look glum, but most of them readily admitted Luton's superiority. So far, the home team had made one solitary shot at goal, while the Reds had been pressing in fine trim almost continually.

The passing of the Luton forwards at this point was really grand, and they swept down the field through all opposition. A minute after the last score, Birch missed a clear opening. Urged on by the crowd, Swindon made a desperate effort to get on equal terms. A slip by McCartney nearly let in Jones, but Stewart spoilt his shot. Sutherland was in a dangerous position when McCartney relieved grandly. The sun now shone brightly for a time in the eyes of the visitors, but Luton were soon pegging away at the other end.

Coupar and Gallacher were combining beautifully—in fact, they fairly astonished Swindonians. The other wing was also doing well, and Ekins had hard lines in hitting the post with a superb shot. There was a big shout as Jones aimed just wide of the Luton goal-posts, but he was ruled offside. Docherty was fouled, but Dibsall returned from the free-kick, and Jones again tried his luck, grazing the post. Then Birch went through grandly, and had only Williams to beat. A dozen yards off he sent in a hard "grounders"—apparently nothing could save it—but the Swindon goal-keeper threw himself along the ground, and, alas for Luton! the ball re-bounded behind off his elbow. It was a wonderful feat, and well deserved the lusty cheers given by the spectators.

Once again, there was some brilliant forward play by Luton, and Ekins must have scored but for an unlucky "cannon." The Reds left was twice penalised for offside, and Ekins was badly fouled by Hopewell as he was getting clear. Half-time now arrived, the score being:

LUTON	..	..	2 goals
SWINDON	..	..	0

On changing over, Luton had to do their pressing on the worst portion of the ground, where the turf was almost covered with water. Nevertheless, they at once threatened danger, and Richardson handling, Ekins centred finely, but Gallacher just missed the chance of a lifetime. Some long kicking by Swindon allowed the forwards to get up, and Jones sent the ball behind off Williams, who was standing close to the post. A foolish piece of holding by Parkinson produced a foul, but the home side could do nothing with it, Ekins next forcing a corner at the other end.

Then came the sensation of the afternoon. The home left was swinging down the field, when Watkins rushed across and "floored" Hayward near the corner flag. "Connie," who says it was an accident, looked very white when Mr. Saywell awarded Swindon a penalty-kick. Williams came out a few yards from goal, and Sutherland shot straight at him, the ball bouncing behind off the Evertonian's legs. From the corner, the Luton goal-keeper effected a really brilliant save, while the crowd, confident that their pets must score, yelled "Goal!"

It was now Luton's turn. Stewart sent in a "daisy-cutter" which almost grazed the post, and as it did so, McEwen shouted with fell intent, "Let it go!" Williams took the tip,

but saw that the ball kept outside the net. Sutherland played a capital game at centre forward, though he was poorly supported. He succeeded in forcing a corner off Williams, who next had to save from Hames, but the latter was given offside. An unfortunate accident now befell Coupar, whose knee was badly kicked by Davies—McCartney calling out that it was "deliberate." Play was stopped for a minute, but Mr. Saywell only threw the ball up. Coupar played on bravely, but it was clear that he was seriously hurt and later in the day the swelling and the pain increased so much that he was taken to Dr. McArthur's immediately on reaching Luton.

The right wing was handicapped after this, Coupar mostly helping the halves. Gallacher, however, managed to get clear, but missed the mark. Occasionally the Swindon forwards made some rushes, the left wing being most conspicuous, and Williams coolly dealt with a fine attempt by Hayward. The Reds had a good opening when Dibsdall handled; McEwen touched the ball to Stewart, who "potted" in the wrong direction. For a while, Luton were sending in shot after shot, but their efforts seemed hardly in dead earnest, or two more goals, at least, would have accrued. Ekins tried a splendid centre, but it went begging, and then Docherty put the ball well in and Luton must have scored, had not Parkinson spoil the whole "show" by shooting through when palpably offside. The Swindon goal-keeper again saved from Ekins, and "Parkie" lost another fine opening. Thus the score remained unaltered when the end came:

LUTON 2 goals

SWINDON.. ... 0 ,,