

The League.-Division II.

GRIMSBY TOWN v. LUTON TOWN.

Played at Grimsby on Saturday. Result:—

Luton Town	3 goals.
Grimsby Town	3 goals.

The Fishermen had practically the same team out as rendered such fine service for them during the latter half of last season, Beveridge of Burnley, and Whitehouse, the ex-Aston Villa custodian, being the only new faces. Luton were represented as follows:—Daw, goal; Dow and McCurdy backs; Morrison, Stewart, and Williams, half-backs; Inglis, Brock, Fairgrieve, McInnes, and Eckford, forwards.

As stated last week, I made special arrangements for a report to be sent me by a Grimsby Pressman, thinking possibly it would be interesting to have an outsider's view of the team on this their first appearance. It will be found below. I notice that he omits to refer to the fact that Luton had to play against a strong wind and a heavy shower of rain in the first half, which no doubt accounted in a large measure for their being three goals to the bad at half-time.

"LINGER LONGER LUTON,"

The most fastidious supporter of the Luton team could not well have been anything but pleased with the way in which they acquitted themselves on Saturday. Whilst the Woolwich "Rods" were going down at Manor Field, my little beauties were covering themselves with glory "by the bad sea waves."

Yes, and those sea waves looked particularly sad on Saturday, for ye bold fishermen of Grimsby had a rude awakening. They fancied that they had a cheap thing on, and that they were going to win hands down. It did look at one time as though they would annex the much-coveted couple of League points, but the cup of victory was snatched from their lips in surprising fashion, for Luton, who had been taking matters in the first half in a very quiet fashion, suddenly woke up and proceeded to rub off, with amazing alacrity, the three goals in arrears.

And they did it in no half-hearted fashion either, for they were far more dangerous in this second half than their opponents, who were greatly taken aback by the bold front put on by the Luton men. Some of the remarks of the home supporters at this sudden change in the fortunes of the game were very amusing. "They have turned the tables upon us, and no mistake," said one. "Yes, they have," replied his companion. "The worst of it is, we have got under the table."

This just about hit off the situation in the concluding half to a nicety. Grimsby had got under the table, and it is not too much to say that had there been another five minutes to have played, Luton would have won the match. Their play all round was far superior to that of the home side, who were so cock-sure of winning when they had obtained a lead of three goals to nil, that they hardly seemed to care to exert themselves.

It was only when Luton were but a goal behind that Grimsby suddenly woke up. Then it was too late. On the other hand, the visitors never let a chance slip them, and the forwards, ably supported by their halves, rattled in shots whenever they espied an opening.

This was without doubt the correct thing to do, and the thing that paid in the long run. One could have easily understood it if the Lutonians had felt a little down-hearted when they saw such a score against them at the interval, but they showed themselves to be possessed of splendid pluck and real grit by taking the bull by the horns in the manner they did.

Their forwards number amongst them some very deadly shots, notably Brock, Inglis, Eckford, and McInnes. The former was in full scog, and enjoyed his day out immensely. As one Pressman said, it was a case of "Brock's fireworks" whenever he got near goal, and the two goals which he scored were very neatly obtained.

They had lots of sting behind them, and Whitehouse never saw the ball when the first goal was scored, as it was whipped across the goal mouth, glanced under the bar, and was into the net, before he knew where he was. It is very evident that during the coming season the popular inside-right intends to make things warm for opposing goalkeepers, and it will be interesting to note how he performs against Woolwich this week when they visit Luton.

Fairgrieve, who scored Luton's third goal, also deserves a word of praise for the skill with which he held his wings together. The combination shown by the front line on Saturday was a treat to witness, and Fairgrieve, as the centre pivot, should have a good share in the credit for this.

The half-back division worked most harmoniously with the forwards, and gave them every assistance, and one or two of the halves when occasion required did not hesitate to shoot for goal themselves. Williams, who played a clinking game throughout, often had a try for goal, and one of his shots nearly had the desired effect.

It was placed nice and high up, and Whitehouse fell to the ground in attempting to save. He, however, clung to the ball, and was having a rather warm time of it on "terra firma," when the referee gave a free kick against two of the Luton men for impeding him, and this gave the necessary relief. Still, it was a most exciting experience for him, and no doubt he will in future endeavour to get rid of the ball more quickly.

Another promising half-back player is Morrison, who tackled finely, and was very useful indeed against the rushing tactics adopted by the Grimsbians. So far as one can see, it would be difficult to improve upon the present halves, provided they play up to last Saturday's reputation.

In McCurdy at back, Luton have a sterling player, who will take some beating. More than once he saved the visitors' goal on Saturday in dashing style, and his returns were both effective and neat.

Daw should make a capital custodian, for he has all the necessary qualities—coolness, judgment, and agility—which go towards the making of a first-class goalkeeper. Nobody who saw the game at Grimsby will blame him for allowing the three shots which scored to go past him. Two of them were placed yards out of his reach, whilst the third goal was scored by the ball rebounding off the body of a Grimsby player. There was a big slice of luck about that shot of Nidd's taken from beyond the half-way line, which secured for Grimsby their second goal. I should say that no one was more surprised than Nidd himself when it went through into the net.

Altogether, the Luton men have done grandly in their first encounter in the League this season. To snatch a point from the Fishermen is no mean performance at any time, but it is all the more creditable when it is borne in mind that the home club were able to place in the field practically the same team which did such splendid service for them last year, and that therefore they had a decided advantage in the knowledge of each man's style of play.

Luton, on the other hand, have what to all intents and purposes may be considered a new team, and we all know that it is necessary to give new players time in which to settle down and adapt themselves to each other's style. A draw of three goals each at the very beginning of the season away from home under such circumstances is all the more meritorious.

Whilst on the subject, a word or two ought to be said with regard to the form shown by the home team. It would not be any use to say that the result was anything else but a sad disappointment to the Grimsby crowd. They had great expectations of their favourites being able to pull off the match, and starting the season with two points in hand. Besides, a League victory would have been a splendid send-off in connection with the new ground at Blundell Park. But it was not to be, and Grimsby had to be content with what may be fairly said to be "a back-seat."

The great weakness so far as they were concerned was the defence. Much had been looked for from Jimmy Whitehouse, the ex-Bedminster and Villa custodian, who has once again returned to his old love at Fishingopolis, but he was given hardly a fair trial. He was considerably handicapped by the action of one or both of the backs in persistently wandering too far up the field, and he could not reasonably be expected to be proof against five such forwards as Eckford, McInnes, Fairgrieve, Brock, and Inghis, when he lacked the assistance he should have received from the back division.

In justice to Beveridge, however, it should be said that the position of back is entirely a new one to him, and his proper place is amongst the halves, in which position he gives promise of turning out a smart player. Little or no fault can be found with the display given by the Grimsby half-backs, for there is no doubt that they are an exceedingly hard-working lot.