

The League.-Division-II.

GAINSBOROUGH TRINITY v. LUTON TOWN.

Played at Gainsborough on Saturday. Result:

Luton Town 2 goals.

Gainsborough Trinity 2 goals.

The teams were as follow:—

Luton: Daw; Dow and McCurdy; Morrison, Stewart, and Ralley; Brown, Brook, Fairgrieve, Molnua, and Eckford.

Gainsborough Trinity: Bagshaw; Pumfrey and Brannen; Pycock, Thornley, and Baker; Nicol, Gelling, Johnson, Redford, and Fenton.

I had intended making the journey to Gainsborough on Saturday, but the unpropitious state of the weather and other circumstances caused an alteration of plans. Perhaps the team were as much affected by the depressing state of the weather as I was myself, for they certainly seem to have been a little below par. To secure a point was creditable enough, but from all accounts they had a full share of luck, and their play, taken all through, was not as brilliant as it has been on some other occasions.

The best report of the match, so far as I have seen, was that contained in the "Athletic Field." The writer says:—Gainsborough Trinity have yet to inflict a defeat upon Luton. The good fortune which has hitherto favoured the Bedfordshire men at Gainsborough did not desert them on Saturday, for the home side was weakened by the absence of Haigh and Hall, chosen by the Sheffield Association to represent that body in the annual match at Glasgow, while Pumfrey, the captain, was suffering from mussels-poisoning, and was also unable to play. These changes left in Nicol, late of Burnley, on the right, and Brannen, both of whom were members of last season's Stockton team which won the Amateur Cup. There was very little wide and the turf favoured fast play.

The home side went off with a rush, and came unpleasantly near scoring. One or two fast sprints by Eckford on the left were poorly followed up, and subsequent loose play by the visiting halves enabled Trinity to put on a lot of pressure, and, in spite of some good work by Dow, Nicol length darted away on the home right and centred nicely to Johnson, who burst through a poor defence and scored the first goal after fifteen minutes. Luton were hereabouts going anything but strongly, their forward play being badly supported, and when, a few minutes after the first success, Fenton ran in from the left, and put on a second point for Trinity with a low grounder, the visitors appeared to be hopelessly beaten. Eventually, however, they pulled themselves together, and after some pretty passing between the forwards and halves the ball was headed into the net from a corner. Luton had worked well for this goal, and thoroughly deserved the success they achieved. The second point was not so good. A long dropping kick was sent in from the left, and Brannen, failing to get in his kick, Fairgrieve rushed the ball into the net. It was very doubtful whether the off-side rule had not been infringed, but the referee appeared to have no doubt. At the interval the game stood two goals each.

The second half was brimfull of exciting episodes, and more enjoyable football could not be wished. Play was uncommonly fast at times, and it is only fair to state that in the concluding stages the home side were unlucky. Five times the ball struck either Luton's crossbar or their posts, and had the result been three to two in favour of Trinity it would not have been an unfair reflex of the game. [I am told that this is very largely imaginary, and that the goalposts and crossbar were not struck at all]. True, the home goal was hotly assailed on more than one occasion, but as a rule Trinity did the greater portion of the pressing. The result was a tie of two goals each. The return match at Luton should be well worth watching.

Luton have a capital back in Dow. Although he was hurt and had been in the thick of the fight, he played a hard, plucky game to the close. The forwards when taking the ball along the field frequently showed a disposition to crowd each other. It is absurd nowadays to see three forwards attempting to work a ball down, and all so close together that a handkerchief would cover them. Eckford is a flyer on the wing, but on Saturday he was not well supported. The great fault of the halves on both sides was skying the ball. There were periods when "headball" would have more accurately described the play.

There is one portion of the criticism in the above report with which I particularly agree, and that is as to the forward play on the Luton side. I am strongly of opinion that the one thing which militates more than anything else against the complete success of the forwards is the closeness with which they conduct their operations. If they were to open out a bit, and give each other a little more elbow room, at any rate until they reach the vicinity of goal, I feel sure they would be a great deal more effective.