

The League.—Division II.

SMALL HEATH v. LUTON TOWN.

Played at Small Heath on Saturday. Result:

Small Heath	3 goals.
Luton Town	nil.

The teams were as follow:

Small Heath: Robinson, goal; Archer and Lester, backs; Adey, Leake, and Farnell, half-backs; Leonard, Bennett, Scriven, Main, and Wharton, forwards.

Luton: Daw, goal; Dow and McCurdy, backs; Brock, Stewart, and Ralley, half-backs; Brown, Fairgrieve, Marshall, McInnes, and Eckford, forwards.

“Not so bad as it might have been” is the verdict with regard to Luton’s visit to Small Heath, but for that the fact that the Heathens, like Luton, were not fully represented, was in a large measure responsible. The atmospheric conditions were favourable, and there was a very good gate, but the ground was decidedly slippery, and this, as at Kensal Rise, had a much more prejudicial effect on the Lutonians than on their opponents.

In the first half particularly the Luton men had the greatest difficulty in maintaining their equilibrium, and time after time slips on their part proved to be of considerable advantage to the other side. Still, after making all allowances on this score, the game was not by any means a great one, and on the play the spoils of war went to the better team.

In the first half, the Heathens, who have proved themselves almost invincible on their own ground, had a lot the best of the exchanges, but nevertheless the two goals which were credited to them were of a very fluky character. Describing these two goals, a Birmingham writer says the first time the homesters got the ball through, “the referee put on a bewildered look, indicated an infringement of the offside rule, and concluded by allowing a goal. It was a masterly piece of indecisiveness. Wharton was given a chance of centreing from the line, and he landed the ball right into the mouth of goal, where Bennett was almost huddling Daw. He breasted the ball into the net, and it was an open question whether Bennett did not deserve penalising. An appeal prompted the referee to point to the spot where Bennett had stood. Everyone expected the kick to be taken for offside, but suddenly the referee pointed to the centre of the field, and there the ball had to be placed in spite of protests.”

The second point was not obtained until just before the interval, “when Lake and Bennett assisted in breasting the ball into goal. Daw prevented it passing him, but the home side claimed that the ball was over the line, and the referee upheld the contention. Thus a second problematical point went down to the credit of the Heathens.”

In the second half, Luton came on very strongly, and for a quarter of an hour the Heathens were kept hard at work defending their goal. Again and again it seemed that the visitors must get through, but though a great deal of energy and cleverness were shown in getting up to goal, the same old inability to take advantage of openings, the same hesitancy and tameness in shooting were manifest, and not one of the many chances was turned to account. All through this half, Luton had their full share of the play, but the only goal scored went to the other side, Scriven doing the trick.

Thus Luton had to submit to another defeat, but it cannot be said that they were disgraced. Daw gave a fine exhibition in goal, Dow was once again in his best form at back, and McCurdy also gave a capital account of himself. In general play, the half-backs formed the weakest part of the team, but the play of the forwards also left a lot to be desired when it came to putting the finishing touch on their efforts.

The following are taken from the “Stray Shots” in the “Athletic Field”:—“Dow kicked magnificently under difficult circumstances. He and Daw did much to keep the score within reasonable limits. Dow never made a miskick, and Daw brought off several remarkable saves. The Luton custodian completely flurried Main on one occasion, and caused him to kick wide of the mark. Main had the ball at his toe and only Daw to beat, but the latter made such an elaborate display of opposition that the Heathen went awry. Luton made a fine effort in the second half and looked like drawing level, but they went all to pieces. There was nothing in the first half like the form they exhibited directly after the interval. Marshall lacks nothing in the way of persistency, but he was not a model centre on Saturday. That he can hold the wing together well is beyond doubt, but he cannot make an impression when the ball comes back to the centre. Fairgrieve and McInnes played a clever game on Saturday. The three points notched by the Brums were tame in the extreme, but the referee did his best to make them notable.”