

The League.—Division II.

LUTON TOWN v. NEW BRIGHTON.

Played at Luton on Saturday. Result:—

New Brighton 4 goals.

Luton Town 1 goal.

The teams were as follow:—

Luton: Daw; Dow and McCurdy; Brook, Stewart, and Ralley; Brown, Fairgrieve, Marshall, McInnes, and Eckford.

New Brighton: Bradshaw; Stephenson and Artridge; Holmes, Hammond, and Allison, Colvin, Hargreaves, Raybould, Tietney, and Hill.

Referee, Mr. Boardley (Plumstead); Linesmen, Messrs. Peters (Kettering) and Wilson (London).

Games good, bad, and indifferent have been played on the Bury Park ground, but on several occasions last year I thought we had reached the lowest possible level. The form shown by the Luton team on Saturday, however, quite eclipsed anything that had gone before, and simply beggars description. What on earth has come over the team no one seems to be able to say, but the men appear to be hopelessly demoralised, and the display given against New Brighton would have been the reverse of creditable to the Reserve.

The prolonged rest which Williams has had to take as consequence of his broken arm has undoubtedly made a lot of difference, because he had just the dash which most of the others lack. The absence of anything approaching smartness, taken all round, is positively painful, and this has had a great deal to do with the succession of defeats we now have to deplore.

Writing from memory, I believe I am correct in saying Saturday's match gave us an opportunity of going one better or one worse than last year's lot. A win, therefore, would have afforded considerable satisfaction, but during the first half-hour the prospects were none too brilliant, and after the visitors had scored, the home team were so completely outclassed that they were like a lot of juveniles against the most accomplished professors.

It was a question whether the forwards or the half-backs were the more to blame for the fiasco, but I don't think the best half-backs in the world would have made the front string an effective force. Fairgrieve has been weak enough, in all conscience, at centre-forward, but Fairgrieve is a flyer compared with Marshall, who has sadly belied his credentials, if he brought any with him at all.

Marshall was a failure against the Kaffirs even, and never shaped like a capable man; he could not have been much better at Small Heath, and on Saturday he did not show an elementary knowledge of a centre-forward's duties. In the second half, he changed places with Fairgrieve, but still Marshall himself did fare a little better, the forwards as a whole went from bad to worse.

The game altogether needs very little description. Luton kicked off in the presence of about fifteen hundred spectators, and New Brighton at once took up the attack, and had all the best of the opening play, save for an occasional run by McInnes and Eckford. Once Raybould made a very clever single-handed effort, and ran clean through, but though he dribbled the ball right into the mouth of goal, he failed to beat Daw, who made a splendid save.

Soon afterwards the Luton left wing created a diversion, and Eckford shot just over the bar. New Brighton made a vigorous response, but were eventually beaten back, and for a time Luton had the best of the play, McInnes at length getting in a smart shot, which struck the crossbar and went behind. Had that shot taken effect, as it deserved, Luton might have come out all right; as it was, their fate was soon sealed.

The Brightonians assumed the aggressive, and after a lot of work by the Luton backs and a couple of fine saves by Daw, Colvin centred almost along the goal-line, and Raybould scored easily. This was soon followed by another goal, Raybould taking advantage of a sort of paralysis on the part of the Luton team, and scoring with a good shot, whilst directly afterwards, Hammond registered a third.

With three goals against them, Luton started the second half under very depressing conditions. Still they managed to infuse some life into their efforts, and Fairgrieve had a good opening from a centre by McInnes, but was too long in taking his shot, and the opportunity was lost. McCurdy next ran through and made a very good attempt at long range, and then all more or less after McInnes and Eckford had made the running, Marshall succeeded in getting the ball.

The performance was received with a good deal of cheering, genuine and ironical, but though the cheerers did their best to arouse a little enthusiasm, they were soon over-weighted by the jeerers, for a bit of additional smartness by the visitors caused the Lutonians to go all to pieces. The Lancashire men literally made rings round their opponents, whose efforts for the most part were ridiculously weak, and presently another goal was scored, Daw falling down to a shot from Hill and Raybould doing the needful before he could recover himself.

Nothing more was wanted by the spectators, who went out of the ground a lot faster than they had come in, and when the whistle sounded for time there were scarcely a hundred people left. It had been a dreadful show. Stewart had done some good work in the early part of the game, but what honour there was on the Luton side fell to Dow and McCurdy, who did all that men could do to stop the rot, and McInnes, who made the most valiant endeavours to get the front string into something like going order.

As to the visitors, they were like so many giants—in ability—not stature—among dwarfs. The forwards all worked well together, like men who know their business. Colvin, the old Glasgow man, especially taking the public fancy. They were well supported by the halves, and the backs did what was required of them in defence without any very great difficulty.