

The League.—Division II.

LUTON TOWN v. MIDDLESBROUGH.

Played at Luton on Saturday. Result:—

Luton Town		1 goal.
Middlesbrough		1 goal.

The teams were as follow:—

Luton: Daw; Dow and Williams; Brock, Holdstock, and J. Brown; W. Brown, McInnes, Draper, Eckford, and Dimmock.

Middlesbrough: Hughes; McCracken and Ramsay; Allport, Raisbeck, and Purcy; Lamb, Gray, Osborne, Evans, and Pugh.

Referee, Mr. W. G. Jones (Leicester); linesmen, Messrs. F. W. Beardsley and H. T. Shackleton.

It was very hard lines indeed on Luton that they should only have made a draw with Middlesbrough, for if ever the home team thoroughly deserved a win they did on Saturday. Although the Yorkshiremen are some way above Luton in the League table, they were beaten in every point of the game except in the matter of scoring, and there they just managed to hold their own. More than three parts of the play took place on Middlesbrough territory, but what with a stubborn defence and a large share of luck, the visitors were able to make a draw of it. The ground was not in the best of condition, being a trifle too soft, but otherwise there was nothing to militate against good football. The spectators were rather more numerous than usual, some thirteen hundred watching a game in which the interest was maintained to the very last. The display altogether was perhaps the best that has taken place on the ground for some time.

At the very outset Luton forced three successive corners, and eventually Roland Brown got in a beautiful shot, which the custodian, at the first attempt, could only knock down in front of him. Unfortunately, there was not a Luton man on the spot, and a fine opportunity was therefore lost. Eckford next got in a couple of grand shots, but Hughes saved both. Then Middlesbrough broke away for the first time, and obtaining a corner. Purcy got unpleasantly near the mark from Lamb's centre.

Luton again attacking, Draper worked his way clean through, but finished up with a rather tame shot. Hughes, however, was a little flustered and muddled the ball, which struck the upright, and then appeared to roll into goal before the custodian could recover it. Appearances were deceptive, for the Luton players made no appeal, and no goal was allowed. Brock was then conspicuous with a fine effort, and afterwards a couple of free kicks fell to Luton. From the second, the ball was nicely placed by Dow, and Dimmock had a rare opening, but shot miles too high.

Eckford again threatened danger with another lovely shot, and then Roland Brown beating Ramsay, centred right along the goal-line, but the other forwards were not up, and once more a fine opportunity was lost. Luton had another fruitless corner, and then the visitors began to show up a little better, putting on some amount of pressure. This the homesters withstood, though their goal had one or two narrow escapes, and when the interval arrived there was a blank sheet.

When hostilities were resumed, Luton went straight from the half-way line, and Eckford sent in a grounder, which Hughes disposed of. The visitors replied with a corner, but Luton soon retaliated, and Roland Brown swinging the ball across, Dimmock returned to the front, and Draper with an open goal clean missed the ball. Again Roland sent in a clipper, and this time there happened to be two or three other forwards to back it up, but the custodian managed to elude them, and scramble the ball away.

Two more free kicks by Dow, and a shot from Dimmock which just skimmed the bar were prominent features in the Luton attack. and then, as sometimes happens, the visitors made a run to the other end, Pugh put in a beautiful shot which Daw could not get rid of, and Osborne succeeded in registering the first goal of the match. Having established the lead by a fluke, it was just possible that Middlesbrough would have more of the play, but events quickly showed that however disappointed Luton were, they were certainly not disheartened.

They began attacking immediately, and not many minutes had elapsed when Roland Brown, receiving from Holdstock, raced away from Ramsay, and put in a magnificent cross shot which Hughes handled but failed to hold. Thus Luton were once again on level terms, and the cheers that greeted the performance were louder, longer, and more enthusiastic than had been heard on the ground for many a long day.

A minute or two later, it seemed that Luton had gone one better, for Eckford netted the ball from a free kick by Dow, but was given offside—a decision which was more than doubtful, and was very little appreciated, either by the spectators or by Eckford himself. Luton continued to have all the best of the play up to the finish, but try as they would they could not again get the ball by Hughes. Several corners were obtained, and rattling good shots were put in by Williams, Roland Brown, and Dimmock, the latter hitting the post, but it was all to no purpose and the game ended in a draw.

Taken on the whole, the Luton display was a very satisfactory one, and a most encouraging feature was that the purely local men rendered a splendid account of themselves. The two Browns were in fine form, Roland putting in a lot of very smart work, and J. Brown once again justifying the good opinions expressed of him. Indeed, should the opportunities occur for developing the talent he undoubtedly possesses, I believe he will make as fine a half-back as Luton ever had. He has any amount of dash, plenty of pace, and first-rate judgment, and with experience he should make a name for himself.

Holdstock was a little too deliberate in his movements in the first half, but afterwards he rendered yeoman service. Draper played a very good game at centre-forward, but Dimmock was not quite at his best. With regard to the other men, Eckford was smartness itself, and performed brilliantly, but McInnes, on the other hand, was a lot below par. He got shaken up a good bit soon after the start, and that may have had something to do with it.

Brock did well at half-back, playing with a spirit and energy that have too often seemed lacking, and both backs did grand work, being always on the alert, and playing all through with great vigour and judgment. Daw, as a consequence, seldom got anything to do. The visitors possess a good half-back line, and two or three fairly smart forwards, but their backs are not over strong. Hughes, however, takes a lot of beating in goal.

The gate on Saturday realised £25, which is small enough in all conscience, but is larger than has been obtained for some time.