

FOOTBALL.

LUTON v. BOLTON WANDERERS.

DEFEATED, BUT NOT DISGRACED.

At Bolton, on Saturday, Luton were playing the Wanderers, to whom they succumbed by 3—0 after a game struggle. Excepting for the absence of Brock, Luton were able to place their full team in the field, Durrant filling the vacancy, while Bolton had made two alterations in their team. There were less than 4,000 spectators present, the visit of the Southerners not exciting much interest. Owing to the rapid changes of the weather the ground was in very bad condition, being very slippery under the thin coating of snow. The sides turned out as follows:—

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

Bolton: Sutcliffe; Halley and W. Brown; Fitchett, R. N. Brown and Freebairn; Morgan, Gilligan, Bell, Picken and Jack.

The visitors had the wind behind them in the first half, but it took them some time to get used to the slippery ground, and the Boltonians were the first to attack. The Luton rearguard, however, was found to be very safe, and time after time Daw, Dow and McCurdy repelled attacks. The half-backs, too, soon began to play in their true form, and they worried the Bolton forwards tremendously. Then the Luton inside forwards got away well and forced a corner, from which the Wanderers' defence had some difficulty in clearing. A penalty was given against J. Brown for a heavy charge, the offence being considered even by the home spectators not to merit such severe punishment. Daw, however, saved cleverly from Gilligan's shot, but just before the interval Jack scored from a scrimmage, and as Luton had to face the wind in the second half the prospect was not exactly encouraging for them. Their defence, though, continued to be strong, and Daw made several good saves, one in particular from a shot by Morgan exciting general admiration. Combined work by McInnes and Eckford threatened danger to the Wanderers goal, but the redoubtable Sutcliffe dashed out and cleared, the ball being rapidly transferred to the other end of the field. Here a pass was made to Morgan, who scored with a smart effort. The visitors' forwards now pulled themselves together and endeavoured to retrieve the fortunes of the day, and a strong attack was made on the Wanderers' goal. An opportunity to score was presented to Dimmock, but he was unable to avail himself of it and so Luton did not obtain a goal which would have been well deserved. Immediately after this miss the ball was rushed back to the Luton end, and Dow had the misfortune to assist the ball on its course into the goal while endeavouring to clear. Thus Bolton were credited with their third and last goal. This happened not long before the finish, and a game in which the best feature was the fine defensive work of the Lutonians ended in a win for the ex-First Leaguers with the following score:—

BOLTON, 3; LUTON, 0.

FOOTBALL FACTS AND FANCIES.

We have learned in Luton to be thankful even for small mercies, and thus there were expressions of satisfaction on Saturday when it became known that the Luton men had only given away three goals with the two League points they left at Bolton.

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And it really was not a bad performance after all, when one considers that the home side was a team which is fighting hard to regain its position in the First League, while the visitors were only just removed from being the possessors of the uncoveted wooden spoon.

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Luton were well represented, although there had been some alterations in the side, Brock standing down through illness, while Durrant took his place on the right wing. Williams's injury at Kettering does not appear to have been so bad as was feared at the time.

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As at other places, some delightfully changeable weather had been experienced at Bolton, and the combined effects of frost, thaw, snow, rain, hail and sunshine had not improved the playing pitch. There were about two inches of snow on a thick layer of mud, and this to a great extent spoiled the play, the visitors appearing to suffer most from the lack of a sure foothold.

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Whatever may be said of the play of the Luton team, it cannot be denied that the men know how to defend. The Wanderers found this out for themselves, for although the Luton forwards did not often trouble Sutcliffe they themselves found a good deal of difficulty in coping with the visitors' backs and halves.

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Were the Luton halves as good in their offensive play as in their defensive work they would be a very strong line indeed. They played a worrying game on Saturday which disconcerted the Wanderers' forwards a good deal and spoiled their combination.

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Only once in the first half could the Boltonians score. They made a good many attempts, but Daw did all that was required of him until Jack, the home outside-left, sent in one of the unstoppable brand just before half-time.

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Even a penalty which was awarded to the home side in the first half was not turned to account, the Luton custodian effecting a clever save. The penalty was awarded for a sample of vigorous play by J. Brown, but most people were surprised when the referee meted out such severe punishment. The charge, although a heavy one, appeared to be quite legitimate.

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Playing with the wind against them in the second half, the Lutonians did not fare so well. Two more goals were notched against them, although it should be said that one was put through his own goal by Dow. They were unlucky, too, on one occasion in not scoring.

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The display of the Bolton men, although they won, did not greatly please their supporters. The forwards were often at fault and their shooting was on the whole not good. The defence was pretty safe.

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Daw was the most admired of the Luton players and he played his usual cool, clever game. One writer says of him: "As may be gathered, Daw added to his fame as a custodian, and Lancashire judges of the game wonder how it is the Luton folk can get such men as this, and as Perkins. Daw's play was not merely safe, it was artistic."

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McCurdy was rather the better of the two good backs, while at half Holdstock most took the fancy of the spectators by the way in which he continually robbed Bell, though his two comrades also did sterling work.

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The efforts of the forwards were rather spasmodic, but there is much excuse for them. They were opposed by an exceptionally powerful defence, while their own halves, although stopping the Bolton forwards well, had not much time to spare to help the front rank.

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Each of the men in the front line, however, did useful work at times, Eckford and McInnes occasionally initiating attacks, while Durrant played better than he has done and the outside wing men, although not having many chances to shine, struggled gamely under the adverse conditions.

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The gate was a poor one for Bolton, less than £100 being received. The explanation apparently is that the good folks there had such a poor opinion of the Luton team that they thought the game would be so one-sided as to be hardly worth seeing. Still, some gates of the same proportions would not be despised down here.

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The *Athletic News* had an account of the game in which the following occurred: "From the beginning the Wanderers were all over their visitors, whose goal repeatedly escaped owing to the wretched shooting of the home forwards. Times without number the ball was worked within easy shooting range, but the goal escaped repeatedly when it seemed certain to fall."

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The same writer also says: "Several of the Luton players are worth places in a better team. W. Brown and Eckford in the front rank, Holdstock at half, and M'Curdy at full-back put in some good work, and Daw was very alert between the posts. As a whole, however, Luton are only a moderate lot, and if the Wanderers had been up to the mark the Southerners would have gone home with a much heavier beating."

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An *Athletic Field* writer speaks of the Luton team thus: "This was their first appearance in the centre of the fine spinning industry, and though they left all the points and all the goals to their friends the enemy, they also left the impression that they are as clever in defensive play as any team which has visited Burnden-park this season; the verdict as the people were leaving the ground being summed up by one stalwart factory hand when in his own dialect he said: 'By gum, chaps, if yon' lads had been owt loike as good forrard as they are at t'other parts o' th' gam' th' Wanderers 'ud bin gradely well licked.'" Readers will probably have more respect for the writer's judgment than for his veracity.

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Under the heading of "En Passant" in the *Athletic News* of Monday occurred the following:—"Luton were only able to make their journey to Bolton through the financial help of their opponents. This is a pitiable position to be in, and does not say much for the enthusiasm of the Bedfordshire people. Followers of the Wanderers looked upon it as a golden occasion for mending their goal average, and so it ought to have been had the forwards shaped at all. As a matter of fact, they were slovenly to a degree, and frequently raised the ire of their supporters by what seemed to be sheer carelessness. Three to nothing may appear satisfactory to an outsider, but Luton are a very weak lot, and did well not to have a dozen goals piled up against them. Those who saw them were not a bit astonished at their humble position in the table."

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I agree that it is a pitiable position for the Luton club to be in to have to be subsidised before being able to send the team, but the writer's remarks on the play of the Luton men do not quite tally with what has been written elsewhere on the game—at any rate so far as the Luton defence is concerned.

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Saturday's results in the Second League tournament were:—

*Newton Heath	3	v.	Barnsley	0
*Walsall	3	v.	Chesterfield	1
*Small Heath	2	v.	New Brighton ...	0
*Sheffield Wednesday...	3	v.	Woolwich Arsenal	1
*Gainsborough	4	v.	Burslem Port Vale	0
*Bolton Wanderers	3	v.	Luton	0
*Burton Swifts	5	v.	Middlesbrough ...	0
Grimsby Town	2	v.	*Lincoln City	0

Played on the grounds of the clubs marked *.

The table of the competition stood thus on Monday, Luton having resumed their position of a fortnight previous :—

							Goals.	
	Plyd.	Won	Lost	Draw.	Pts.	For	Agst.	
Sheffield W....	26	19	4	3	41	70	19	
Bolton Wanderers	26	15	8	3	38	52	22	
Small Heath	27	17	6	4	38	68	30	
Newton Heath	26	16	7	3	35	48	19	
Leicester Fosse	25	13	8	9	35	37	19	
Grimsby Town ..	25	12	8	5	29	43	38	
Lincoln City	25	12	8	5	29	40	34	
Woolwich Arsenal	26	12	10	4	28	44	32	
Burslem Port Vale	26	11	12	3	22	34	42	
Chesterfield ...	25	11	9	5	27	52	52	
Walsall	25	9	10	6	24	44	43	
N. Brighton Tower	26	7	11	8	22	42	46	
Middlesbrough ..	28	7	14	7	21	36	56	
Gainsboro' Trinity	25	6	14	5	17	35	60	
Burton Swifts.....	26	6	15	5	17	36	63	
Barnsley	25	6	15	4	16	37	61	
Luton Town	26	4	15	7	15	33	57	
Loughborough ..	25	1	20	4	6	14	83	



The games for to-morrow (Saturday) are as follows :—At Barnsley, Sheffield Wednesday v. Barnsley ; at Burslem, Bolton Wanderers v. Burslem Port Vale ; at Grimsby, Small Heath v. Grimsby Town ; at Leicester, Newton Heath v. Leicester Fosse ; At Luton, Loughborough v. Luton Town ; at Middlesbro', Chesterfield v. Middlesbro' ; at New Brighton, Burton Swifts v. New Brighton ; at Walsall, Gainsboro' Trinity v. Walsall ; at Woolwich, Lincoln City v. Woolwich Arsenal.



The visit of Loughborough to-morrow should result in the addition of two points and a few goals to Luton's record. If the latter club is in a bad position, the condition of the Leicestershire organisation is infinitely worse, while Luton's League record is quite good by comparison, the "Luffs" having gained only six points in 25 matches against Luton's 15 in 26 games.

FOOTER.