

FOOTBALL.

LUTON TOWN v. LOUGHBOROUGH.

EASY WIN FOR LUTON.

The match at Luton on Saturday was rendered somewhat more interesting than usual by the fact that the teams engaged occupied the lowest positions in the League list. The day was bright but cold, and there was a moderate attendance. The teams were:—

Luton: Daw; Dow and McCurdy; Garrett, Williams and J. Brown; W. Brown, Hawkes, Brock, McInnes, and Eckford.

Loughborough: Stopes; Hardy and Wright; Bailey, Hogkin and Roulstone; Jellis, Clifford, Rose, Parker and Mumford.

The referee was Mr. Jones (of Leicester).

Loughborough started with only nine men, and they continued to be in this weakened condition until half an hour had elapsed from the start, when the full complement of eleven was made up by the arrival of two other players. The Lutonians had a good deal the best of matters in the first half. Williams comparatively early in the game sent in a couple of shots in rapid succession and narrowly missed scoring. A beauty from Eckford followed, and later on Brock managed to get right in front of goal, but was given off-side. Following a corner to Luton the visitors made their way down, but Dow secured and after a capital run transferred to Brown, who shot hard and straight. McInnes headed in from a centre by the outside right, but did not succeed in getting the ball through. The visitors, who were displaying fair style, next showed up prominently, though it ought to be said that their tactics in playing one back considerably lessened the chances of Luton, the home forwards getting offside whenever they made an advance. After a time a penalty was awarded against the "Luffs" for a foul on Brock, and Dow experienced little difficulty in steering the ball past Stopes. A second was obtained shortly after by Brock, and before the interval Hawkes put on a third from a well-judged pass by the centre-forward. The half-time positions were:—

LUTON, 3 ; LOUGHBOROUGH, 0.

Early in the second portion a corner fell to Luton, who were having a good deal the best of the exchanges still. A tight scrimmage near the Loughborough goal almost resulted in a score, and again, shortly afterwards, the homesters ought to have improved their position. The visiting goalkeeper was penalised for carrying, and even then Luton did not succeed in scoring. Brown, after some clever play by the Luton forwards, sent in a beautiful shot from the line which the keeper managed to turn over the bar. Later on, some very fine shots at the Loughborough goal were taken, and on one occasion one of the visitors punched out the ball with his fist, an occurrence which was not taken cognisance of by the official in charge. McInnes sustained a nasty cut over the eye towards the finish from the right back, and that player was afforded an unmistakeable indication of the feeling amongst the players towards him. It should be said, also, that the referee did not give satisfaction by some of his decisions and he, too, was chipped. Towards the end Brock succeeded in scoring once more, and so a game which was productive of some passable play and more than the ordinary number of fouls concluded with the scores standing thus:—

LUTON, 4 ; LOUGHBOROUGH, 0.

FOOTBALL FACTS AND FANCIES.

Of course we all expected a victory over Loughborough by a substantial majority, and for once in a way the expectations were realised. There was not such a big margin as some people had thought there would be; but there was an ample difference between the scores.

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Whether the fact that Loughborough had only nine men in the early part of the game more seriously affected the locals or the visitors must be left to eye-witnesses to determine. My own impression was that the "Luffs," by playing the one back game, put the home lot at a very distinct disadvantage.

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I was agreeably surprised at the form of the Leicestershire men. Their position at the bottom of the list would seem to indicate that they are absolutely inept. Perhaps the captious reader will be inclined to interpolate that the 4-0 victory of Luton proves it!

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Seriously, the visitors played in very fair style, their forwards being especially dashing, while one of the defenders at least was prominent repeatedly. But the front rankers neglected openings time after time and were by no means smart when anywhere near goal.

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I should like to know what the right back thought of the Luton crowd. I know what at least a section of the spectators thought of him. The language used concerning him was "painful and free" and was utterly unprintable.

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Though there was no excuse for the use of such shocking expressions, there was at the same time no reason why the offender should have imported so much foulness into his display. Poor McInnes was the victim, and we all sympathised with him.

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How is it that Mr. Jones almost invariably affords ground for criticism when at Luton? On Saturday the crowd were "at it again," and I am sure if the referee had heard some of the things concerning him and his decisions he would have adopted stern measures. Still, some of his rulings were a wee bit mysterious.

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As for the local players the rearmost trio played a bold defensive game that succeeded to admiration. Daw saved well once or twice, and both backs were in first-rate form.

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The Luton halves were a capable trio, though I have seen Williams play in far better style. Brown was deserving of a special word of praise.

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Roland Brown at one stage made one of the very best shots that has been witnessed on the home ground for a long time. He sent into goal from the line, and Stopes had all his work cut out to save. By the way, I disregard the temptation to make a weak joke on the custodian's name.

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Brock came off better at centre forward than he has done in some other positions. He had a share in three of the four goals, and throughout played in fairly good style. The left wingers were first-rate, Eekford being especially prominent.

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The Loughborough men are piling up what must surely be a record for League football—or rather it is being piled up against them. Prior to Saturday they had had 48 goals scored against them without responding, and Saturday's four Luton goals brought the total to upwards of half a century.

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Through

to upwards of half a century

Through the season the "Luffs" have had 87 goals notched against them, while they have scored but 14. Badly as the Lutonians have fared they have a better record than this. I should think such a victory at Loughborough as that of Luton at home on Saturday would be made the occasion for general rejoicing—unless it be that the interest taken by the public in the doings of the team has declined to vanishing point.

There is a good deal of speculation as to which of the Second Division clubs are to earn promotion. It seems to be generally concluded that Sheffield Wednesday and Bolton Wanderers will be the fortunate teams. But it must not be forgotten that the "Fossils" of Leicester are not yet out of the running. They are a very respectable third.

There was in any case bound to be a great crowd at the Crystal Palace to witness the final for the English Cup; but I should think many who would not otherwise have turned their faces in the direction of Sydenham will be induced to do so by the fine struggles which the Southern champions have been making.

I congratulate both Millwall and Southampton—both ancient foemen of Luton, by the way—upon the grand performances they have put in for the honour of the South, and should not at all wonder if the cup finds a resting-place in this part of the country this season. Of course I do not mean in Luton, for our ambition in that direction were sadly snuffed out by the Queen's Park Rangers.

After all, why should not the Southern sides be capable of holding their own? The best of them are nowadays made up of men thoroughly skilled in the game, and it is a noteworthy fact that from Southampton three international players have been selected this season.

Saturday's League games resulted thus:—

*Barnsley	1	v.	Sheffield Wednesday	0
*Woolwich Arsenal...	2	v.	Lincoln City	1
*Luton	4	v.	Loughborough.....	0
*Walsall	1	v.	Gainsborough	0
*New Brighton Tower	5	v.	Burton Swifts.....	0
*Grimsby Town	2	v.	Small Heath	0
Chesterfield	1	v.	*Middlesbrough	0
*Leicester Fosse	1	v.	Newton Heath.....	0

Played on the grounds of the clubs marked *.

To-morrow (Saturday) the matches are:—Loughborough v. Burslem Port Vale; Sheffield Wednesday v. Leicester Fosse; Lincoln City v. Barnsley; Gainsborough Trinity v. Middlesbrough; Burton Swifts v. Chesterfield; Bolton Wanderers v. Walsall; Newton Heath v. Luton, referee, A. F. Sutcliffe; linesmen, C. C. Fallowfield and J. J. Hadfield; New Brighton v. Grimsby Town; Small Heath v. Woolwich Arsenal.

The Lutonians do not on recent form stand a very good chance at Newton Heath, even though the latter had their colours lowered at Leicester last Saturday. The "Heathens" stand in a capital position on the League list, and unless the Luton men perform as well as they did against Bolton Wanderers they will most likely catch a severe cold.

I may be reminded that on one occasion the Lutonians beat the "Heathens" on their own dingy ground. True, but seasons change and clever players depart, and so it is that one approaches the visit to Manchester with anything but confidence.

Next week we enter upon the last month of the season. Will it also be the last month of the club as a professional organisation? I have heard that it is not intended to abandon the ground while the lease continues, but as matters have been going lately the position must be anything but pleasant for the directors.

However, during April we are to have visits from such capital sides as Sheffield Wednesday, Lincoln and Small Heath. What a sensation there would be if the homesters succeeded in defeating all three! I assure readers that I am sane enough when I say that my surprise thereat would not be very great.

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The away matches are at Loughborough and at New Brighton. The first match ought to yield points; I am not so sure about the latter, for I remember the New Brightonians beat us at home by 4-1. Still, it will be the end of the season and anything may happen.

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It will be well to escape the last two positions on the League list if possible and so save automatic exclusion. That would be an extremely undesirable termination to the career of Luton as a League club, inglorious as one must confess it has been. At one time the side performed fairly creditably; but that was only for a season or so, and the promise of better things was not fulfilled. More's the pity.

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It will be remembered that when the Chesterfield team came to Luton on the day after Boxing-day it was generally considered that the home side ought to have won, instead of which the strangers secured a victory by 3-0. On Monday the return fixture was decided at Chesterfield, when the homesters won by 2-0.

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The League table on Tuesday stood thus:—

										Goals.
	Plyd.	Won	Lost	Drn.	Pts.	For	Agst.			
Sheffield W....	27	19	5	3	41	70	29			
Bolton Wand'rs.	26	15	8	3	38	58	22			
Small Heath ...	28	17	7	4	38	68	32			
Leicester Fosse	26	14	8	2	37	39	19			
Newton Heath	27	16	8	3	35	48	21			
Grimsby Town .	26	13	8	5	31	50	38			
Chesterfield.....	30	13	9	5	31	55	52			
Woolwich Arsenal	27	13	10	4	30	46	33			
Lincoln City	26	12	9	5	29	41	36			
Burslem Port Vale	29	11	12	6	28	34	42			
Walsall ...	26	10	10	6	26	45	43			
N. Brighton Tower	27	8	11	8	24	47	46			
Middlesbrough ..	29	7	15	7	21	26	57			
Barnsley	28	7	15	4	18	26	61			
Luton Town	28	5	16	7	17	37	59			
Gainsboro' Trinity	26	6	15	5	17	35	61			
Burton Swifts....	27	6	16	5	17	36	68			
Loughborough .	26	1	21	4	6	14	87			

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A Bedford contemporary, commenting on the match between Bedford Montrose and Luton Reserves, says: "A friendly match was played between the Bedford Montrose on their ground, on Saturday, and Luton Town Reserves. It was supposed to be a friendly, but towards the close Luton became unwarrantably rough. So much so that one man was warned by the referee, and the crowd vigorously hooted. There was one very good point about the visitors' play, and that was their defence. The two goals scored by the Montrose were both from free-kicks, the first a penalty, and the second from a free-kick followed by a rush."