

THE UNITED LEAGUE.

RUSHDEN v. LUTON TOWN.

Played at Rushden on Monday. Result:—

Luton Town 2 goals.

Rushden 1 goal.

The Luton team was identical with that which opposed Southampton on Saturday, and the following did duty for Rushden: Cooch; White and Tye; Hobbs, Cook, and Sale; Coles, Drage, Brown, Miles, and Denton. The referee was Mr. J. G. Hackaley, and Mr. J. Clarke, who a couple of seasons ago played for Luton, officiated as the Luton linesman.

As readers are aware, Northamptonshire grounds are not ideal places for football, and that which serves the Rushden Club is no exception to the rule. It slopes gently from one goal to the other, and is of such limited extent that it would not be a difficult feat for Lindsay to kick from end to end, whilst a very slight deviation from the centre of the field suffices to take the ball into touch. The consequence is that the players often find themselves all of a heap, and it is absolutely impossible to play a nice open game.

The Luton men never succeeded in accommodating themselves to these conditions, and Rushden made a much better fight of it than their supporters had dared to hope for. Rushden are struggling under adversity. The support accorded them in recent years has been far from satisfactory, and nearly all their old players have left them. But they have some very promising youngsters, and these youngsters went for all they were worth on Monday.

Indeed, it was freely said that if they had shown anything like the same form on Saturday they would have beaten Hinckley, the Midland League team, into smithereens. But opposing teams have always seemed to have the knack of reserving their best form for Luton, and the exhibition which the Rushdens gave on Monday caused the two hundred odd spectators to look at them with open-eyed astonishment.

The game did not commence until after half-past five. If the kick-off had been delayed much longer it would have been a case of playing by moonlight. The homesters won the toss, and taking advantage of the slope, Denton, a very likely youth, made a splendid run on the left wing, eluding both Clifford and Lindsay, and putting in a lovely shot, which only just missed the mark.

Saxton did ditto at the other end, and then a centre by Roland Brown gave Molyneux a chance, but the centre-forward stopped to steady the ball, and the delay was fatal. After that came a couple of corners for Luton, and from the second Holdstock had a good opening, but skied the ball. Molyneux ought to have scored easily from a pass by Blessington, but his shot had no powder behind it, and Cooch saved. Blessington put in a pretty piece of dribbling, and then transferring to Tierney. The latter sent in a trimmer, the ball striking the post after Cooch had turned it aside.

Rushden retaliated, and Monks saved twice in succession from Drage. Just before the interval Lindsay, who had incurred the displeasure of the crowd by the amount of vigour he put into his play, rushed across and charged a man off the ball just against the touch-line, and the referees gave a penalty. This took the kick, and

to the chagrin of the spectators, Monks brought off a splendid save.

The teams crossed over with a blank sheet, and though Luton subsequently tried hard to alter this state of affairs, they were for a time unsuccessful. Then a Rushden man endeavoured to upset Blessington, and the referee giving another penalty for what appeared to be a simple charge Lindsay undertook the kick and gave the custodian no possible chance of saving.

But Luton did not hold their lead for long, for after Miles had hit the crossbar with a good shot, a foul was given against Luton for some reason which it was difficult to fathom, and Sale placing in front of goal, Miles put on the finishing touch. A little later Monks made a grand save from Brown, the Rushden centre-forward, who had managed to get quite clear, but for the most part the play favoured Luton, who, however, seemed quite unable to steer the ball between the uprights.

But the longed-for goal came at last, Blessington rushing the ball through from a good centre by Saxton. Directly afterwards Tierney netted the ball again, but the whistle had just gone for a foul against Rushden, and from the free kick nothing resulted. Luton, therefore, had to be content with a two-goals-to-one victory.

One can hardly criticise the play of the Luton men, for the simple reason that the ground did not give them a chance. Molyneux was the weak man in the front string, and he certainly needs a lot more life and go. Tierney did well, but he would have done much better had he passed with a little more freedom. I think Blessington was the best of the bunch. Holdstock and Williams put in a lot of good work, and Clifford improved as the game proceeded. Both backs gave a first-rate account of themselves, though Lindsay was not altogether free from the blame which the crowd attached to him. Monks kept goal splendidly.

The Rush'ens played a very smart game, and were absolutely fearless. Denton is a nice little outside-left, and Coles is very speedy on the right. The half-backs were a trio of triers, and Cooch in goal was marvellous. The referee appeared to be perfectly impartial in his decisions, but he seemed to entertain a very decided objection to charging, and frequently gave fouls for which I could see no legitimate reason. The penalties also were for very mild offences.