

The visit of the Lutonians to Swindon on Saturday would, under ordinary circumstances, have been watched with considerable interest. That feeling, however, was detracted from by the thought that the visitors would not be nearly at full strength. The defection of Tierney and the suspension of Molyneux and Saxton brought a noticeable weakness in the front line, and when it was found that Burbage could not play it was concluded that the "blues" would not be very successful in their visit to the West. The rearrangement of the Luton vanguard was effected by the inclusion of a new centre and left wing. The Swindon lot were not at full strength either, for Anthony and Brown were missing. In their absence a trial was given to Edwards, an amateur, at outside left, Kirton being transferred to the centre. Ord, by the way, made his first appearance in the Luton colours.

There were about 3,000 spectators present on the County Ground when Mr. H. Walker took command of the following sides:

Swindon: Menham: Ritchie and Stephenson; Downie, Logan, McEleney; Richardson and Smith, Kirton, Gardner and Edwards.

Luton: Ord; Lindsay and McCurdy, Clifford, Holdstock and Williams; Brown and Blessington, Plummer, Cox and Durrant.

The visitors won the toss and set the locals to face a glaring sun. The Westerners at once attacked, Richardson steering the ball behind. The homesters, keeping up the pressure, secured a free-kick, and then a corner was yielded to them by McCurdy. This was not productive. Ord saved well from Gardner. At the other end the Lutonians had a look in and Menham brought off a fine clearance from Brown, who shot hard and straight. The play was fast and fairly even, the defence on both sides being as steady as the attack was clever. When the game had been in progress just over ten minutes a free-kick was awarded to the home lot not far from Ord's charge and from this Gardner scored, the custodian having no chance whatever. Shortly afterwards the ball was again sent through, this time by Edwards, but the referee decided that the outside left man was off-side. The strangers struggled gamely to retrieve their fortunes and on one occasion Menham was particularly sorely tested. The ex-soldier, though, came through splendidly. Kirton and McCurdy came into collision, with the result that the latter was winded. After a slight stoppage of the game he was enabled to resume. Swindon pressed later on, though Gardner was scarcely so smart as he might have been. Next Menham effected a capital save when sturdily assailed by his opponents, and Cox struck the post after off-side had been given. Lindsay was hooted for fouling Kirton. The Lutonians held their own for some time after this. The home defence was capable and the Luton forwards were prevented from breaking through, though on one occasion Brown shot high over the bar when a capital opening was noticed. Later on Plummer put in the best shot of the game. Menham cleared, and a warm attack by the home lot followed. When the interval was rapidly approaching Smith secured from a big kick by Ritchie and lowered Ord's colours. The visitors struggled hard to reduce the home side's lead, though without avail, and at half-time the positions were:

SWINDON, 2; LUTON. 0.

The game was fast and exciting after the resumption, Swindon doing most of the shooting, and they forced several corners. The Luton forwards occasionally broke away, and from one of these Blessington found the net, but the referee, after consulting a lineman, disallowed it for off-side. Just before time Brown scored the only goal for Luton. Directly after time was called, and a good game resulted thus:—

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FOOTBALL FACTS AND FANCIES.

It was not at all surprising that the Luton players were defeated at Swindon on Saturday, even though the homesters' ranks had to be reconstructed. The visitors' front string was nothing nearly so strong as when Bristol City suffered defeat—and a capable set of forwards make all the difference to any side.

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It is true the Swindon men had not been performing very well. They had not succeeded in obtaining winning brackets; indeed, their best display was the draw with Watford—when, as I am informed, they ought to have been beaten fairly easily.

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That we were not more severely dealt with brings an alternative suggestion—either that the Swindon side is not very strong, or that the standing down of Molyneux, Tierney and Co. did not detract very greatly from the strength of the Lutonians.

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The Luton lads appear to have had their fair share of the game, and had not the Blessington goal been disallowed the result would have been even more satisfactory. It was not at all a bad performance for the Lutonians to go West and run the Wiltshire lot so close.

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One writer, commenting on the play, commences with the following complimentary statement: "I don't think Luton are going to disgrace themselves in the Southern League. That they will be such a power in that organisation as they were five or six years ago is scarcely likely, but although time has brought a certain waning of strength, the returned wanderers should prove themselves capable of holding their own in the company in which they now find themselves. At any rate, they made a gallant fight at Swindon on Saturday, and in being only beaten by the odd goal they achieved a most creditable performance."

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The same writer observes: "A comparison between two sets of forwards would be distinctly favourable to Luton, who displayed much greater cohesion and worked with a better understanding than the Swindon quintette. There was some very decent shooting on the part of the visitors, but their best efforts were unsuccessful, and the one goal they obtained was a present to Brown. There was little the matter with either defence, and Roger Ord made a creditable debut for Luton. Lindsay spoilt his display by an unnecessary show of temper, and came under the notice of the referee."

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The *Athletic News* winds up its statements thus: "Swindon's victory was due to the splendid play of the halves, who completely broke up the visitors' attack, and worked like horses from start to finish. Where all played so well, it would be impossible to individualise. Gardner and Edwards were the pick of the forwards. On the Luton side, Ord, M'Curdy, and Brown were the best. It is a great pity that so good a back as Lindsay should stoop to the foul tactics he was guilty of on Saturday. The referee would have been amply justified in ordering him off the field."

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I am sorry to notice the remarks concerning Lindsay. We know very well that he attracted the notice of the referee on the previous Saturday by indefensible conduct, and he ought to take a warning. He is a splendid player and should not mar his exhibitions in this way.

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The editor of the *Football Evening News* in "My note-book" last Saturday had the following pertinent observations:—"As was said last week, professional football players, as a class, are much maligned and over-criticised. There is a sediment in the profession just as there is in most callings. That refuse soon sinks to the bottom, but until it is removed the whole profession cannot be made pure. Some football pros.'s cannot regard their business seriously. They think because they have been emancipated from the dank and dangerous coal mine, or the unwholesome factory to a life of healthful ease and comparative luxury, that restriction of any kind is a thing no longer to be thought of."

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"Such was evidently the state of mind of the men who have just been ruthlessly rooted out by the executive of the Luton club for indulging in a low drunken orgie and all its accompanying vulgarities and obscenities. The penalties imposed have not erred on the side of severity. It is to be hoped that they will be regarded in the light of a solemn warning by all paid players."

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I have noticed that on the boardings at the Football Ground have been posted placards appealing to the public to be of good behaviour. Some such bill might exert a welcome influence were it exhibited in the players' dressing-rooms.

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It may be thought by some that I have an antipathy to professional players. Not in the least. I cheerfully acknowledge that the advent of professionalism into the South of England brought a kind of play such as we had hitherto been unaccustomed to. Unfortunately it brought also a far from welcome tendency towards roughness and blackguardism. This offending ought to be ruthlessly dealt with.

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Saturday's Southern League results:—

Millwall	...	3	bt	New Brompton	...	1
Queen's Park Rangers	...	1	bt	Watford	...	0
Bristol Rovers	...	4	bt	Gravesend	...	0
Kettering	...	1	dr	Reading	...	1
West Ham United	...	1	bt	Chatham	...	0
Swindon	...	2	bt	Luton	...	1
Portsmouth	...	0	dr	Southampton	...	0
Bristol City	...	1	dr	Tottenham Hotspur	...	1

* indicates home clubs.

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Southern League table to Saturday:—

	Played	Won.	Lost.	Dr'a.	Goals For	Goals Agst	Pts
Bristol Rovers	4	3	0	1	10	3	7
Portsmouth	4	3	0	1	5	2	7
West Ham United	4	3	1	0	11	3	6
Millwall	4	3	1	0	9	3	6
Reading	4	2	0	2	7	3	6
Bristol City	4	2	1	1	8	4	5
Queen's Park Rangers	4	2	2	0	9	6	4
Tottenham Hotspur	3	1	1	1	6	4	3
Southampton	3	1	1	1	4	5	3
Kettering	4	1	2	1	4	7	3
Watford	4	1	2	1	4	9	3
Swindon Town	4	1	2	1	4	10	3
Luton	4	1	3	0	6	8	2
Chatham	4	1	3	0	8	3	2
New Brompton	4	0	3	1	4	8	1
Gravesend	4	0	3	1	2	14	1

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To-morrow (Saturday) we are to entertain the Watford team, and a capital "gate" is being anticipated. The Hertfordshire team did very well indeed at Kensal Rise on Saturday, and it is to be hoped that they will give us a good game. It will be noticed by the table that they stand a bit better in the League than do the Lutonians.

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"Abaris," writing in the *Echo* on Monday evening, said: "Swindon followed the lead Luton had given them the previous week by collecting their first winning points of the season; and did this at the Strawplaiters' expense. That the Bedfordshire men lost by only a goal is a matter upon which the club's executive deserve congratulation, seeing that they had to put up a team disorganised through the suspension of a couple of players who, by disgraceful conduct, made suspension inevitable."

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The Reserves have been at it again, and once more have piled up a long score. The victims on this occasion were the Hitchin Blue Cross men. I am not surprised that the Reserves should be displaying such good form, for they showed up remarkably well against the seniors.

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It was somewhat curious to notice in the home team some Hitchin men. Barker at centre forward created a very good impression, while Barnes gave a capable show at left half.

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A writer in the *Sporting Life* deals very capably with the question of the representation of the South in the English Cup competition. He says: "We are not quite sure that the assured share of the South in the competition proper is quite as large as it ought to be. In fact, the latest innovation (the 'intermediate stage') may have the effect of cutting down the South's share so that it becomes much smaller than it would have been had the old rule of merely a 'Qualifying Competition' and a 'Competition Proper' been adhered to. For, under that rule, the South would have been certain of having seven representatives in the Competition Proper this season, viz., the four divisional winners in the qualifying competition, together with the three clubs (Millwall Athletic, Southampton, and Tottenham Hotspur) which have been excused the qualifying contest *in toto*."

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"But now we in the South can only be quite sure of these three excused clubs being in the Competition Proper, for the four division winners will have to pass through the trying ordeal of the 'intermediate stage,' and, in this new feature of the contest, the Southern clubs are in a big minority. For there will be 20 clubs in all taking part in the contest at this stage, viz., the 10 divisional winners, and the 10 clubs specially excused the Divisional encounters. Of the 10 Divisional winners only four will be Southerners, and of the 10 excused clubs only three (Bristol City, Portsmouth, and Woolwich Arsenal) are Southerners. So that, of the 20 clubs playing in the intermediate stage, only seven will be from the South. The number of Southern clubs going from the intermediate contest to the competition proper may thus be anything from nil to seven; so that instead of the seven absolutely safe places referred to above, the South may have in the final stages of the big contest anything between three and 10 representatives."

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"There is thus a deal of 'glorious uncertainty' about the event which cannot be very gratifying to the Southern mind. Our own view is that, looking at the merits of the clubs, as a whole, in the North, the Midlands, and the South, the South is entitled to 10 of the 32 places in the competition proper. The 'intermediate stage,' therefore, can only have the effect of reducing what should be the irreducible minimum of the South's share in the contest; and, therefore, the new stage is decidedly 'hard lines' on the South. Let us, however, gird up our loins and win in fair fight all the 10 places that should have been allotted to the South in the serener atmosphere of the Council Chamber."

FOOTER.