

BRISTOL ROVERS v. LUTON.

AN UNSATISFACTORY GAME.

On Saturday Luton were at Bristol to decide this match in the Southern League. There were about 4,000 spectators. The weather was damp and the ground slippery. The Rovers were able to muster their full team, and the Luton team was: Ord; Lindsay and McCurdy; Clifford, Holdstock and Williams; Brown and Blessington, Barker, Dempsey and Saxton.

Luton won the toss and had a good many chances, some going so far as to say that they ought to have scored two goals within the first three minutes. Saxton and Dempsey soon got away and Saxton had a shot at goal; but the ball went across the goal. Brown missed scoring and Paul sent in a fine shot for the Rovers, which Williams luckily stopped. Clark for Bristol and Brown for Luton were very zealous in their efforts to score. Gray, the Bristol custodian, cleared badly and gave Luton a corner. The forwards on both sides were playing in bad style and the halves were doing good work. Holdstock put in a good shot and Gray caught and cleared. Gray afterwards cleared from Brown and Dempsey. Gray was specially noticeable for his splendid goal-keeping. The Rovers had some chances and forced two corners. Holdstock tried the Bristol custodian with a straight shot just before half-time. However, when half-time came the scores were:

ROVERS, 0; LUTON, 0.

On play being resumed both sides pressed in turn. Bristol attacked again, and at last Paul forced a corner. Then there was some nice passing by the Rovers until a goal was scored in magnificent style by Griffiths. Even play followed, and Luton came very near to scoring. Clarke cleared and Williams's return went outside the goal. Luton had all the best of the play afterwards, but failed to score through bad shooting. They wasted three chances, and so the final score was:

ROVERS, 1; LUTON, 0.

FOOTBALL FACTS AND FANCIES.

The failure of the "blues" at Bristol on Saturday was not in any way disheartening. We had all concluded that the Rovers would succeed in holding their own at home, and that the adverse margin was not greater was a source of gratification to us all.



The Lutonians appear to have played a really good game, and to have given the Bristolians quite as much trouble as they wanted. It is a pity the visitors could not manage to secure a goal or two, for success would have done them a heap of good.



It seems that both sides might have done better. The Lutonians, however, had most of the play in the early part of the game and they also had some capital openings. They did not accept these, however, the forwards being principally to blame.

A writer in the *Athletic News*, who heads his report "A lucky win for Bristol Rovers," says:—"Some supporters of Bristol Rovers will not like my headline, I am afraid. Still, the fact remains that they were lucky to beat Luton on Saturday. During the first hour and a quarter of the match at Bristol they were acting on the defensive three-fourths of the time. That was due partly to the slackness of their backs, and partly to a mishap which befell Boucher, their centre forward, who strained his side badly. Then Griffiths scored a smart goal, following a corner, and from that time onwards they managed to do a little more than hold their own, without being able to increase their own."

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"Both sets of players blundered badly on the slippery ground. Kifford and A. Griffiths were often at fault, and the visitors should have profited by more than one of their mistakes. Their forwards, however, constantly got off-side, and so wasted the chances which presented themselves. Still, Gray was often troubled, and he experienced considerable difficulty in dealing with the wet ball. Blessington, who was the leader of the Luton attack, was often prominent in everything but shooting. He left more of that to Brown and Dempsey, but when half-time was reached neither side could claim a goal, though the visitors had certainly done most of the pressing."

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"Following the interval, the Rovers were not seen to any greater advantage, Boucher being little more than a passenger. Play became more scrambling in character, and it was getting rather dull, when a capital effort by Luton left Dempsey in possession a few yards from Gray. He lifted the ball high over the bar, and following this escape the Rovers attacked strongly. They got a corner, and Paul, keeping the ball in play, passed to H. Griffiths, who scored. After this, the home side went in for long kicking, and no more goals being scored, they just managed to win."

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"As I have said, it was not a great game. On such a day Luton did the right thing by going in for long passes, and shooting whenever a chance presented itself. Blessington and Dempsey were quite the best of their forwards, though Saxton did far better work than he was accustomed to perform last season for Bedminster. Their half-backs were never idle, while the backs played a vigorous game, particularly Lindsay, who kicked splendidly. The only man on the Rovers side who quite showed his true form was Gray, and he gave a wonderful display in goal."

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The *Evening News* writes: "Saxton and Brown missed scoring in the first minute, while Paul had a fine shot luckily stopped by Williams. A bad clearance by Gray gave Luton a corner. Play was very fast and even, both sets of halves doing excellent work. The forward play, however, was rather weak. Offside tactics cost the visitors dearly. Still they had the best of the play, Gray being frequently called upon. He kept the ball out of the net in wonderful style."

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Saturday's Southern League results:—

αReading	...	...	1	bt	Watford	...	...	0
Southampton	...	...	1	bt	αQueen's P'k Rangers	...	...	0
αMillwall	...	...	6	bt	Chatham	...	...	2
αKettering	...	...	0	dr	Swindon	...	...	0
αPortsmouth	...	...	3	bt	West Ham United	...	...	2
Tottenham Hotspur	...	...	2	bt	αNew Brompton	...	...	1
Bristol City	...	...	3	bt	αGravesend	...	...	1
αBristol Rovers	...	...	1	bt	Luton	...	...	0

α indicates home clubs.

On Monday the table stood thus:—

	Played.	Wo	Lost.	Dr'n.	For	Agst	Pts
Bristol City	11	8	1	2	25	9	18
Portsmouth	10	8	1	1	23	9	17
Southampton	10	8	1	1	24	12	17
Bristol Rovers	10	7	2	1	23	10	15
Millwall	11	7	3	1	25	12	15
West Ham United	10	5	4	1	17	10	11
Reading	10	3	3	4	9	7	10
Tottenham Hotspur	8	3	3	2	12	9	8
Luton	9	4	5	0	13	12	8
Kettering	10	3	5	2	14	20	8
Queen's P'k Rangers	10	3	6	1	15	17	7
New Brompton	10	2	6	2	11	17	6
Watford	10	2	7	1	9	21	5
Chatham	10	2	7	1	7	28	5
Gravesend	9	1	6	2	7	28	4
Swindon Town	10	1	7	2	6	19	4

It was highly unfortunate for the home directors that Monday was such a wretchedly inclement day. Given fine weather there would have been a large attendance to witness the second meeting of the season with the 'Spurs.

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The fact that Luton won for the second time seems to make them out a bit the better team. Certainly they were smarter on Monday, and the visitors were lucky to escape so lightly as they did. There will be a big "gate" at Tottenham when the Lutonians journey thither in the League fixture next February.

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To say that it was a great game would not be true. What could be expected with rain falling throughout, with the ground sodden and with a strong wind sweeping from end to end of the ground? Under the circumstances the players gave a really good account of themselves.

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What was wanted was some straight shooting from the home forwards. That is a requirement all the time, and until there is some improvement the team will not rise much higher in the League table. This, by the way, is not intended as carping criticism, but as a friendly hint.

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Of course the fact that Brown was injured fairly early in the game was altogether against the chances of the homesters. It was plucky of "Roland" to resume; but he was not very much good after he was bowled over.

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The locals won because they were smarter on the ball than their opponents. It used to be quite the other way about. While the 'Spurs have degenerated the Luton team has improved, a fact that gives us all great satisfaction.

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To individualise is scarcely fair, perhaps; but McNaught played such a determined game for the losers that I think he must receive a special word of commendation. "Jimmy" does not get younger with advancing years, of course; but he seems to have retained his cleverness. Some of his side touches were beautiful.

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Clawley gave a really good display in goal. He is an able custodian and bore himself well, some of his saves being remarkable.

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The home forwards were superior to the Tottenham five. Some of the passing was excellent, despite the heavy going. The halves were first-rate, and Lindsay was a great source of strength at back. It was a treat to watch his splendid kicking. Ord brought off one or two marvellous saves.

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The draw for the seventh division in the English Cup competition resulted in Luton being set down to entertain Civil Service and Watford to act as hosts to Queen's Park Rangers. I suppose I shall be fairly safe in prophesying a victory for Luton!

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The *Evening News*, writing with reference to the proposed charity cup competition, says: "Unfortunately there seems but small chance of launching the competition this season. Nearly all the clubs concerned have contracted engagements which cannot possibly be cancelled. All interested feel that the project is well worthy of the very best efforts of those taking a share in it. And therefore it is not proposed to make the scheme unduly subservient to the ordinary League programme. At the beginning of next season, granting that sanction be obtained, space will be allowed at the annual conference of secretaries for charity cup dates."

The *Bedford Record* of Tuesday had the following: "The Monts made a big bid for victory at Luton on Saturday, but were again defeated in the last few minutes of the game. It was a splendid game throughout, the result always hanging in the balance, and had the referee been smarter on the players and infringements, it would have been an enjoyable one too. There was a big crowd, who did not behave in the best manner, for the visiting linesman came in for some severe handling, and we understand the referee is likely to report the matter."

FOOTER.