

THE SOUTHERN LEAGUE.

BRISTOL ROVERS v. LUTON TOWN.

Played at Bristol on Saturday. Result:—

Bristol Rovers	1 goal.
Luton Town	nil.

The teams were as follow:—

Bristol Rovers: Gray; Kifford and A. Griffiths; Draycott, Robertson, and Neilson; Clark, Jones, Boucher, H. Griffiths, and Paul.

Luton: Ord; Lindsay and McCurdy; Clifford, Holdstock, and Williams; Brown, Blessington, Barker, Dempsey, and Saxton.

Such is the confidence inspired by the Luton team that many of their supporters expected them to go to Bristol on Saturday and gain at least one point at the expense of the Rovers, who are considerably higher on the League table and are, in fact, only fourth from the top. Such a performance would have been a startler for the football world, and would have surrounded the Lutonians with a halo of glory.

And yet, as events proved, there was a good deal of ground for the optimistic anticipations of the Luton people, for though the visitors to Bristol did not get the coveted point, they came very near it, and indeed had all the best of the game. If the shooting had been a little more up to the mark, Luton would have had not one point only, but a couple.

The Bristol correspondent of the "Daily Express" says:—"Considerable interest was manifested on Saturday in the visit of Luton to Bristol, this being their first visit to the western city since their inclusion in the Southern League; and, despite the unsettled weather, there was a large crowd on the Rovers' enclosure. Luton having defeated Bristol City on their own heath this season, the supporters of the Rovers were somewhat anxious as to the result, and, as events proved, there was some ground for this feeling, the Rovers only getting home by one goal.

"On the play, Luton, who had nearly three parts of the game, certainly deserved to win. They could do everything but score, and had it not been for the brilliant work of Gray, who saved again and again for the Rovers, their efforts would have resulted in victory. Perhaps the wretched state of the ground had something to do with the Rovers' display. There was evidently something wrong with them, as they never seemed at home with the leather.

"The Strawplaiters' forward play was vastly superior to that of the Rovers; their men were much quicker on the ball, and altogether showed much the best form. The Rovers' forwards seemed unable to travel on the heavy ground. Their shooting was also very erratic at times, several misses being made. Saxton, the old Bedminster forward, played a grand game for Luton. Holdstock, their centre-half, and Lindsay, back, were, however, the best men on the field, their exhibition being very fine."

The Clifton correspondent of the "Athletic News" describes it as "A Lucky Win for Bristol Rovers." He says:—"During the first hour and a quarter of the match, Bristol were acting on the defensive three-fourths of the time. 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 offside, 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. Following the interval, 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. Blessington and Dempsey were quite the best of the Luton 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."

The "Morning Leader" correspondent says:—"On the first half form Luton should have won, and even taking the game all through they ought to have won. . . The Luton backs presented a most resolute front to the home attack and gave them absolutely no latitude, nor longitude either for the matter of that, as their halves headed admirably. Brown was good at periods in the front rank, but sometimes his shooting was suggestive of water in its weakness. Forward Saxton and Blessington were not lazy."

In the other Southern League matches, three visiting teams secured victories, Southampton beating Queen's Park Rangers by a goal to nil, the Spurs vanquishing New Brompton by 2 to 1, and Bristol City beating Gravesend by 3 to 1, whilst at Kettering, Swindon must have surprised themselves by making a pointless draw. Millwall at home beat Chatham by 6 to 2, Portsmouth had all their work cut out to beat West Ham by 3 to 2, and Reading just got the better of Watford by a goal to nil.

The following is the League table up to date:—

					Goals		
	Pld.	Won.	Lost.	Drn.	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	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 Park 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	23	5
Gravesend.....	9	1	6	2	7	23	4
Swindon	10	1	7	2	6	19	4

The second half commenced with another bad mistake by the referee, who pulled Saxton up for offside after the latter had made a brilliant burst to get on the ball and had passed no fewer than three men. At times during this half the play was fairly interesting, and on one or two occasions Tottenham came near equalising, but they did not enjoy anything like the monopoly of the play that Luton had in the first half.

There could be no doubt that taken altogether Luton were much the superior team, and this notwithstanding the fact that Brown got hurt before the interval, and was more or less incapacitated afterwards. Still, the best man on the field was in the losing team, and his name was McNaught. He played a grand game, and was in deadly earnest all the way through. When he got the ball, it was an absolute certainty that he was going to make good use of it. Stormont also performed well, and Erentz showed capital form at back. Clawley also gave a smart exhibition.

Of the Luton players, it can only be said that they proved themselves to be a capable team, and for the most part they were content with that. Williams, as usual, was always on the move, and Lindsay was not giving anything away, whilst Ord made one or two brilliant saves. Dempsey was clever, but I should like to see his methods directed to goal-getting rather than to beating the other fellow.

Blessington rendered good service, but Barker was palpably weak at centre, and I must say I have my doubts whether he is strong enough to stand the vicissitudes of a League campaign. On Monday, he did not keep sufficiently forward, and several opportunities were lost on this account. It didn't matter much on this occasion, but if we are to win League matches, there will have to be more sting in the centre.

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On Saturday next, Luton will be in the throes of a Cup-tie, and according to all accounts it promises to be a very exciting affair. The Civil Service will be the visitors, and the refereeing will be in the capable hands of Mr. A. Milward. I suppose most Lutonians are disposed to look upon the Civil Service as comparatively small fry, but the Civilians themselves are not altogether of that way of thinking.

The "Morning Leader" of Tuesday contained the startling headline, "Great Success of Civil Service in Cup-ties," and went on to say:—"Civil Service are earning an enviable reputation for consistency, and they won their sixth Cup-tie this season in very decided fashion on Saturday Weybridge, according to those in the know, were to promptly settle the ambitions of the Service men to win the Amateur Cup. The good thing, however, did not come off, and Weybridge retired defeated by 4-0. The Service had out a very fine team, whilst Weybridge, as the winners of the Surrey County Cup for four years out of the last eight, were also strongly represented, C. D. Hewitt, the Corinthian, figuring as captain of the side.

"Up to the present Civil Service have met and defeated the following teams in Cup-ties: Willesden Town, West Hampstead, Crouch End Vampires, Redhill, Godalming, and Weybridge, their goal average being 17 goals to 5. Next Saturday the English Cup compels Civil Service to meet Luton at Luton, where it is possible the Servants will meet with their first defeat, but it will be a determined struggle, for the amateurs have both weight and speed—two very useful commodities in Cup-ties. Mr. E. L. Holland, the Service hon. sec., is organising a party to go down with the team by the 1 p.m. train from St. Pancras."

"Tit-Bits" also says that the Civil Service have a centre-forward who is a miniature G. O. Smith. It will be seen, therefore, that Luton are not going to have anything like a walk-over. The kick-off will take place at 2.30.

The junior clubs of Luton and district are now very numerous, and it has been suggested that a third division of the Junior League should be formed. For this purpose a special meeting of the secretaries of the various clubs interested has been called to meet to-morrow (Friday) evening. When the League first came into existence two seasons ago, it was decided that there should be two divisions. At the last annual meeting the Management Committee recommended that there should be only one division, but it was urged that many of the clubs were very much stronger than the others, and that it would not be fair to the weakest. It was therefore decided that there should still be two divisions, and these remain so at present. If the suggestion find favour, efforts will be made to start the thing at once. Such an undertaking requires to be very carefully managed if it is to be a success.

The first round of the Beds Cup Competition is to take place on Saturday, kick-off at 2.45 p.m. Markyate, Luton Amateurs and Luton Ferndale are exempted from this round, and Luton Reserves, Bedford Montrose, Bedford Queens, and Leighton Cee Springs are exempt from the first two rounds. Woburn Sands Albion are to come to Luton to play the Buxton Rovers, and the visitors should win easily. St. Matthew's are to journey to Aspley Guise, but I should imagine the homesters will win. The Clarence should easily beat the Montrose, and the Boiler Works should account for Luton St. Mary's without much trouble. The second round is to be played on December 15th.