



SOUTHERN LEAGUE.

BRISTOL ROVERS v. LUTON TOWN.

DEFEATED, BUT NOT DISGRACED.

The visit of Luton to Bristol on Saturday was awaited with considerable anxiety at the western centre, and a hard game was anticipated. It was the first time either team had met, and both teams put strong elevens in the field. Up to date the Rovers have not been defeated on their own ground. They play a strong, forcing game, which has spelt disaster to all teams visiting them this season. They hold a strong position in the League table, taking fourth place, and Luton is their latest victim, although the latter kept them out for 75 minutes of the game, when the Rovers managed to beat Ord, and thus gained the victory.

It was a miserable afternoon, but a crowd of 3,000 had assembled on the Stapleton-road enclosure, and Luton were well received on entering the arena. Luton played the same eleven that beat King's Lynn the previous Saturday, with the exception that Brown again partnered Blessington on the right, Durrant's injury not permitting him to make the journey. The referee was Mr. J. E. Carpenter, of Leicester, and he made a punctual start with the following 22 under command :

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

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

Luton won the toss, and kicked with the wind in their favour. The visitors at once began to press, and caused the Rovers' defence some anxious moments. Blessington led the Luton forwards finely in all their attacks on the home citadel, but he should have shot more instead of leaving it to the wing men. Both sets of players blundered on the slippery ground, and could not get a sound footing. The Bristol backs were often at fault, and had Luton been smarter on the ball, they should have scored on more than one occasion.

The Luton forwards got too far up the field, and on several occasions were given offside. Gray, however, had some difficult shots to negotiate, and the wet ball caused him great trouble on one or two occasions. Dempsey scored an offside goal for Luton, but the visitors could not get the ball past Gray, who was playing a great game. The Rovers made one or two spasmodic rushes into Luton territory, but they could not make much headway against the strong defence.

The Luton team tried long passing, and several times they got within an ace of scoring, but Gray came to the rescue on each occasion. The interval was fast approaching, and both teams were anxious to secure the lead, but the defence of both was stronger than the attack, and the interval arrived with a blank sheet.

No score.

On crossing over, the Luton team pressed strongly, and gave the Bristol defenders a warm time of it. The Rovers' attack was weakened by Boucher, their centre-forward, getting injured, he being little more than a passenger during this half. The Luton forwards swarmed round Gray's charge, but failed to beat him. Play was of a scrambling nature, and neither team showed much combination, and there was little or no life about the play.

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Following some give and take play in front of the Bristol goal, Dempsey had a rare chance, but he shot high over the bar, to the great relief of the home team. The Rovers now attacked, and forced a corner off Lindsay. Paul placed the ball well in play, and H. Griffiths beat Ord with a fine shot which gave him no chance. Thus the Rovers scored the first and what proved to be the winning goal of the match after half an hour's play.

Having secured the lead, the home team intended to keep it, and each time the Luton team got near goal the Rovers kicked the ball anywhere, and the game resolved itself into one of goal-kicks and throws-in. The Luton team tried hard during the closing minutes of the game to equalise, but all their efforts were futile, and they retired defeated with the score :
Bristol Rovers 1, Luton 0.

NOTES.

The Luton team have no reason to be down-hearted by their defeat at Bristol on Saturday, for few teams will bring points away from the Rovers on their own ground. It was a poor game all through, the wet ground considerably affecting the play of both teams. Luton's play was superior to the Rovers, and it was hard lines to lose after keeping them out for an hour and a quarter. Ord, in goal, did not have much to do, and could not be blamed for the goal scored against him. Lindsay and McCurdy both played finely, and gave the Rovers' forwards little chance of doing damage.

The half-backs all played a good game, and Holdstock watched Boucher incessantly. Clifford and Williams were very effective. The forwards could not make much headway on the wet ground, and their play suffered in consequence. Blessington was best, but might shoot a little oftener. Brown also played a fair game, but Barker in the centre was not so successful as in his previous displays. Saxton and Dempsey on the left were well together, and it is pleasing to see the former keep up his improved form.

For the Rovers, Gray in goal, played a really magnificent game throughout. He had several anxious moments during the game, and came out of the ordeal with great credit. Kifford and Griffiths at back were inferior to the Luton pair.

Their halves could do with improvement. Robertson at centre-half is good, but the other two moderate. Their forwards could not do much against the Luton defence. Boucher strained himself during the first half, and did not shine much afterwards. The right wing was passable, but Griffiths and Paul, on the left, were the best of a poor quintet.

The referee was very satisfactory, and the "gate" was a very good one considering the miserable weather.

The other matches in the Southern League on Saturday produced some hard tussles, notably at Kensal Rise, where Southampton just managed to win, scoring the only goal of the match. It should be mentioned, however, that they had to play 10 men through the second half, owing to their International goalkeeper getting injured, and Wood took his place in goal. Another hard game was that at New Brompton, where Tottenham Hotspur won by 2 goals to 1, the winning goal being scored 6 minutes before the finish. At Gravesend, Bristol City won with ease by 3 goals to 1; Portsmouth beat West Ham at Portsmouth by 3 goals to 2, after being behind at the interval; Millwall romped home against Chatham at Millwall by 6 goals to 2; Swindon made a creditable draw at Kettering, neither side scoring; and Watford were beaten at Reading by 1 goal to 0.

The Southern League table up-to-date is as follows: