

THE ENGLISH CUP.

QUALIFYING COMPETITION.—SEMI-FINAL.

LUTON TOWN v. CIVIL SERVICE.

AN EASY VICTORY FOR LUTON.

The visit of the Civil Service to Luton on Saturday in the semi-final of the English Cup was not regarded with much anxiety by the supporters of the Luton club, for while admitting that they may be strong opponents in their own class, they were never expected to make more than a good show. In the result the Londoners disappointed their supporters who travelled down by special train by giving a very lame display, and with the exception of one or two spasmodic rushes rarely crossed the half-way line.

While the Luton Club were exempted from the first two rounds, the Civil Service men have had to play through all the preliminary competition, and have been drawn away on each occasion. They first had to play Willesden Town, who were defeated by 3-1; Crouch End Vampires were their next victims, going under by 7-0; and in the third round they defeated Godalming by 2-1. They are strong cup-fighters, and their tie with Luton on Saturday was the seventh that they had participated in up-to-date; while they had won six of them straight off the reel, with a goal record of 17 against 5.

The copious rains during the week had soaked the ground and made it very heavy going, while the weather on Saturday was about as bad as it could be, and with the wind blowing half a gale, the game was played under anything but favourable circumstances. It was surprising to see such a good "gate," about 1500 braving the elements—a numerous contingent coming with the visitors. In the home team Burbage played vice Barker at centre-forward, and the late arrival of the visitors—not an unusual occurrence amongst amateur teams—delayed the start a quarter of an hour, and it was 2.45 when Referee Milward whistled the following 22 into order:—

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

Civil Service: Johnson; Robinson and O'Brien; Ritchie, "D. Fender," and Davies; Turner, Gooseman, Bedford, Bryant and Scott.

Luton won the toss, and secured the great advantage of the wind. They at once attacked, and Blessington sent in a fine shot which went just over. Johnson saved well from Brown, and McCurdy and Holdstock both put behind. A foul within the 12 yards line by O'Brien on Brown resulted in a penalty being awarded Luton, from which Lindsay scored the first goal for the home team after 5 minutes' play. From the kick-off, the Service got away, but Gooseman shot behind.

Luton once more assumed the aggressive, and from a well-placed corner by Brown, given by O'Brien, Blessington scored No. 2. Davies fouled Brown, but the kick was fruitless, and some fine passing between Brown, Blessington and Clifford, resulted in Blessington again beating Johnson, the goalkeeper completely misjudging the ball. Directly after the same player again scored, and offside against Burbage spoilt another opportunity. In trying to clear an attack by the home forwards, O'Brien nearly put through his own goal, the ball just grazing the post. The play was all in the visitors' quarters, and after Holdstock had missed an opening, Blessington beat Johnson for the 5th time.

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Keeping up the pressure, Luton were giving the visitors' defence a very warm time, and a fine dropping shot by Burbage deserved to score. The Service team tried hard to get to the other end, but the Luton defence was too strong. Two "frees" were of no advantage to them, but a sudden rush by the right wing resulted in Turner forcing Lindsay to give a corner, from which Scott beat Ord. The spectators cheered their success loudly, and for a time they played up better. Luton, however, were soon attacking again, and Dempsey shot over from Lindsay's place-kick from a foul on Clifford. Lindsay tried a long shot, but the ball went over the bar, and Holdstock shot behind from a free-kick for offside against Turner.

Dempsey fouled Ritchie, but nothing resulted from the kick. Johnson gave a corner to a fine attempt by Burbage, but Brown put the kick behind. Another corner to Luton followed, and from Williams' place-kick, Johnson, in saving, knocked the ball on to one of his own players, from whom it rebounded into goal, scoring No. 6 for Luton. Two corners forced off Ritchie were not improved upon by Luton, but from a well-judged pass by Burbage, Saxton dashed in and scored No. 7 for Luton. The same player directly after missed another fine chance, but Johnson saved. Nothing tangible resulted before the interval, which arrived with the score:—

Luton 7 goals, Civil Service 1.

On crossing over, Dempsey took the centre forward position, and Burbage went to outside left. Luton were the first to get dangerous, and Robinson cleared finely from a centre by Brown. The Service men tried to improve their position by long shooting, but Ord was in fine form, and never gave anything away. A foul on Burbage was the means of scoring Luton's 8th goal, the ball going through off Robinson from Williams' place-kick. Ord cleared well from Gooseman, and at the other end Johnson had to clear twice in succession from Dempsey, and a pretty shot by Blessington just went behind.

From a foul against Luton, O'Brien put the ball into the net untouched, and Holdstock cleared from a "free" against Clifford for a foul on Scott. The rain now began to fall in torrents, the players being drenched. The game, too, was very slow and uninteresting, the Luton team simply playing with their opponents. Johnson had to clear from Blessington, and Burbage made a fine but unsuccessful attempt to convert a centre by Brown. Johnson saved well from Clifford, and Brown shot behind with only the goal keeper to beat.

The Service eleven then made a run, and Bedford should have scored, but he waited too long, and Ord cleared. Johnson saved well a beautiful centre by Burbage, and hesitation by Dempsey lost a fine opportunity of increasing Luton's lead. After Williams had shot over, however, Saxton, who had changed places with Dempsey, beat Johnson for the 9th time. The crowd called loudly for double figures, but they were not forthcoming, and from now to the finish the match was played in semi-darkness, it being difficult to distinguish the players. No more scoring took place, however, and Luton retired easy winners with the score:

Luton 9 goals, Civil Service 1.

NOTES.

The game was a one-sided affair, and the Civil Service were no match for the home team. The wretched weather was against accurate play, and the heavy ground told on both sets of players, more especially the visitors. The home team all did well, and Ord, in goal, was rarely tested, but was always there when occasion required. Lindsay was a tower of strength at back, and on occasion he kicked the ball from goal to goal. He was ably assisted by McCurdy, and never gave the visiting forwards much latitude.

Holdstock was again the best of the half-backs, and played a cool and resourceful game throughout. He watched Bedford incessantly, and not once did the latter beat him. Clifford was inclined to do too much "on his own." Williams played a fine untiring game. The forwards did not seem to get together nicely, and the fact that the three inside players changed places on two occasions during the second half is sufficient proof.

Blessington was the pick, and showed fine form all through, scoring four goals on his own, and having a hand in all the others. Brown played a decent game, and Burbage also showed good form, being most successful at outside left. Saxton still kept up his improved form, and made several fine attempts to score in the second half. Dempsey played a good game in the first half, but wasted several opportunities in the second through hesitation.

As to the visitors, Johnson, in goal, played well, despite the large score against him, and could not be blamed for any of the shots that beat him. They have a fine back in L. O'Brien,

who is a nephew of the famous Middlesex cricketer, and he showed up far in advance of his partner, Robinson, who was rather weak. The former has a fine turn of speed, and both kicks and clears with fine precision. Their halves are not over strong, and need strengthening. Ritchie was the best of a poor trio, "D. Fender" and Davies playing only a moderate game.

The forwards are a brisk quintette, and against a less reliable defence, they would give the defenders a very anxious time. Perhaps their late arrival affected their play, for they had to come straight from the train to the field of play and scarcely got settled down. Bedford was too well watched to show his capabilities, and their right wing was only mediocre.

The left wing was the stronger of the two. Scott made some good attempts to break through the Luton defence, but he found in Lindsay a tough customer to deal with. He never gave up trying though, and was instrumental in scoring the only goal for his side. His partner, Bryant, played a fair game, but was rather slow, and lost several chances through hesitation. The refereeing was very good, and satisfaction was given to both sides.

To-morrow (Saturday) Luton again play away from home, when the United League claims their attention and they have to travel to Kettering to meet their old rivals. Kettering have been playing very well this season, their latest achievement being the knocking out of Gresley Rovers from the English Cup competition on Saturday, by 3 goals to 1. They are making a good show in the Southern League for this, their first season. As the championship of the United League is likely to rest between Luton and Kettering, a hard game is sure to result, but Luton should pull through. On the Bury Park enclosure the Reserves meet Stantonbury St. James' team in the Bedford and District League.