

The English Cup.

LUTON TOWN v. QUEEN'S PARK RANGERS.

Played at Luton on Saturday. Result:—

Luton Town 3 goals.

Queen's Park Rangers nil.

The teams were as follow:—

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

Queen's Park: Clutterbuck; Newlands and McConnell; Keech, Hitch, and Skinner; Gray, Downing, Goldie, Humphrey, and Foxall.

Referee, Mr. N. Whittaker; linesmen, Messrs. W. T. Reed (London), and W. F. Chappell (Kettering).

The weather, the all-important consideration for Saturday's match, was neither so good nor so bad as it might have been. The morning's prospects were all in favour of another soaking wet afternoon, and right up to the last moment one never knew whether there was going to be a downpour or not, but happily, though there was a drizzle, and though generally it was as dull as dull could be, there was not a great deal to interfere with the comfort of the spectators.

A quarter of an hour before the match, there was not much promise of a big gate, the ground presenting a comparatively deserted appearance, but a few minutes before half-past two the people seemed to come altogether, with the consequence was a great pressure at the different entrances. Matters are not facilitated when two or three persons try to squeeze through a space sufficient for only one, and as a result of this scrimmaging, the game began before some of the people had gained admission to the ground. The crowd altogether numbered over 4,000, the gate amounting to £112.

The Rangers brought about three hundred followers from London, and from those three hundred they received plenty of cheering early in the game. Last year, it will be remembered, the Rangers made a draw in the Cup-tie at Luton, and beat us handsomely in the replay at Kensal Rise by four goals to one. But the constitution of both teams has changed a good deal since then, and Lutonians were very confident that the advantage of the changes was on their side, and that they would be able to revenge themselves for last season's disaster.

The visitors, who had undergone special training for the event, seemed bent upon carrying the Luton men off their feet at the onset, for, playing with a strong wind behind them, they went for all they were worth, and Foxall had the honour of the first shot at the Luton goal. Luton got away once or twice, but during these early stages the Rangers were very much quicker and smarter on the ball.

When, however, Luton fairly got going, they soon proved themselves to be the stronger team, and despite the wind, the greater part of the play took place on the Rangers' territory. Brown had two or three good openings afforded him by the ever-ready Blessington, but Roland either passed back to his partner when he should have centred, or centred behind instead of in front of the goal.

Gray made a brilliant run for the Rangers, but was at last deprived by Lindsay, who ran across the ground and kicked out, and then Williams transferred the play, and put in a grand shot which went only a little wide. Durrant next got away, and put in two beautiful centres. From the second Brown put back to Holdstock, who shot hard along the ground, and Clutterbuck, in saving, and with two or three Luton men on top of him, appeared to take the ball well over the goal-line, but Mr. Whittaker refused to listen to the appeal of the Luton players for a goal.

Luton continued to have all the best of matters, and from a free kick, placed by Lindsay, Saxton had an open goal, but missed the ball altogether. Two or three other chances were not turned to account, and once Skinner came near doing the trick by kicking over his own goal. The corner was not improved on, and the Rangers succeeded in getting to the other end, where, from a foul against Lindsay, and a rather weak save by Ord, Humphrey had a glorious opening and shot high over the bar.

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Just before the interval, Luton made a very hot and sustained attack on the Rangers' goal, which experienced several marvellous escapes, and when the whistle blew honours were still easy. But it was generally anticipated that Luton would win, for having the best of the exchanges against the wind, it was only to be expected that their superiority would be more decisively demonstrated when they had the wind in their favour.

Saxton and Dempsey had changed places in the latter part of the first half, and when they started the second, it was seen that Dempsey retained the centre-forward position. No sooner was the ball put in motion than Luton showed they meant business, but Lindsay was a little too energetic, and a foul given against him close to the twelve-yards' line looked rather ominous. A corner resulted from a shot by Gray, who threw away the advantage by placing behind.

Luton immediately responded, and a corner being conceded them, Brown placed, and meeting the ball again, dropped nicely on the opposite side of the goal, and Durrant headed through. At this, the cheers were loud and long—so loud, in fact, that I was afterwards assured they were heard very distinctly at the Midland Station. This goal was got just seven minutes from the start of the second half.

Encouraged by their success, Luton again took up the attack, and Durrant was responsible for a shot which looked very dangerous, but luckily for the Rangers cannoned off one of their men. Directly afterwards, Blessington put in some very smart and effective work, and enabled Brown to get clear. Roland kept the ball going well, and putting in a very business-like centre, Durrant rushed up and scored a second goal. This point had taken another seven minutes to get.

Singularly enough, just seven minutes later, a third goal was forthcoming, Dempsey doing the trick from a long kick to which he would have been offside but for the ball touching a Ranger in the course of its passage. With three goals to the good, the game was practically over so far as the result was concerned, but it was a pity that the Luton players took it so much for granted as to do nothing but fool about for the rest of the time.

To slow up a little is one thing, but to cease playing the game, to pass for passing's sake, to keep the ball until it is taken by an opponent, and to play the clown generally, is quite another. The consequence of these silly manoeuvres was that the Luton men really had to work harder than they had during the other part of the game, but it was individual work—the combination had gone—and the Rangers, who had hitherto been held in check, were now often in the vicinity of the Luton goal.

Once or twice the visitors might easily have scored, Ord on one occasion making a marvellous save, whilst on another, Lindsay gave a penalty by taking a man's feet from under him. Humphrey was entrusted with the kick, and to the disgust of the Londoners, and the relief and amusement of the Lutonians, he shot just the wrong side of the post.

When the call of time was given, Luton were left the winners by three goals to nil, and they were fully three goals the better team, although there were times when a little luck might have enabled the Rangers to get on better terms. The visiting forwards, however, are evidently not great goal-getters, although they are tolerably smart and know how to play the game. Their half-backs are fairly strong, Hitch perhaps being the best of the trio, and the backs on Saturday played a very good game. But for their sturdy defence, goals would have been much more prolific.

As to the homesters, Blessington, until he got his ankle hurt, was the best of the forwards,

though Brown and Durrant both showed first-rate form. Those three were the mainstay of the Luton attack. Dempsey performed very well in the centre—his best game, perhaps, up to date—but I was rather disappointed with Saxton. And yet Saxton worked as hard as any of them! But his great fault was that whenever he got an opening, he waited just a little too long before taking his shot, and his opponents generally managed to prevent the shot being taken at all.

Williams played a dashing game in the first half, and Holdstock performed with rare judgment all the way through, whilst Clifford also gave a sound display. Our three halves are about as good as they make 'em. McCurdy was seen to much better advantage than he had been in recent matches, and Lindsay, except that he occasionally ran some risks from an undue display of energy, was fully equal to all demands.

In the other Cup-ties, Clapton, who are going great guns, drew with West Ham at Canning Town at one goal all, but the other amateur team, Richmond, to wit, were beaten at Reading by 2 goals to nil. Bristol Rovers vanquished Swindon by 5 to 1, but an even better performance was that of Kettering, who went to Burton and beat the Swifts by 2 goals to 1. Middlesbrough beat Bishop Auckland by 4 to nil, and at Barnsley Chesterfield won by 5 goals to 1.

In the replayed Cup-tie at Upton, on Wednesday, Clapton were beaten by West Ham by 3 goals to 2.

The Luton first team are due at Southampton on Saturday, but I am sorry to say that Lindsay, who strained the muscles of his leg in the last five minutes of the Cup-tie, will not be able to go. His place will be taken by White, of the Reserves. The Reserves will be at home to Rothwell, in a United League match, and a very interesting game should result.