

Football.

THE SOUTHERN LEAGUE.

BRISTOL CITY v. LUTON TOWN.

Played at Bristol on Saturday. Result:—

Bristol City 1 goal
Luton Town 0

The teams were as follow:—

Bristol City: Thomas, Back, M. Lewis, and Chambers, and Davies, Jones, Michael, Wilson, and G. Lewis, Stevenson, Luton: Ord, Clifford, Carr, and Marriott, and McCurdy, Williams, Lee, Saxton, and Brown, F. Hawkes, Barker, and Bennett.

Although Luton lost on Saturday by a goal to nil, their performance must rank as one of the best of the season. Even at full strength, a loss against such a powerful team as Bristol City on the City ground by the narrow margin of one goal, would be anything but creditable, but under the circumstances under which this match was played, the defeat—and it was only just a defeat—deserves to rank with the very best of the Luton displays.

The great enthusiasm of the Luton supporters would never, in his wildest moments, have imagined that with Lindsay taken from the backs, Holdstock from the halves, and Blessington from the forwards, Luton would be able to hold their own on foreign territory with one of the strongest combinations in the Southern League, and he would have been still less likely to indulge in such a claim if he could have foreseen that during the greater part of the game the Lutonians would be restricted to the use of four forwards, owing to one being placed hors de combat.

Yet it was under such conditions that Luton on Saturday encountered Bristol City, and the result speaks volumes for the skill and energy of the Luton team. Seeing that I did not venture to make the journey to Bristol myself, perhaps I cannot do better than quote the report supplied by the Bristol correspondent to the "Athletic News." It runs as follows:—"After Saturday's display at St. John's-lane, Bristol, it was easy to understand how Luton came to beat the City in September by two goals to none. When they gained that memorable victory it is true they were represented by a very different team to that which played on the occasion under notice. Still, the absence of such men as Lindsay, Holdstock, and Blessington was atoned for by the presence of Ord in goal. He signed on for Luton the day they conquered the City, and I may not be far wrong in saying he never gave a finer exhibition than he did on Saturday.

"The Bristol public are not exactly quick to recognise merit in an opponent, but at half time, and again at the close, they gave Ord as enthusiastic a burst of applause as that reliable player has ever received. What is more, he deserved it. He did not save the game for his side, but he kept the scoring down to one goal, and he had no chance to deal with the shot which beat him. It was his luck to find his opponents in a merry shooting mood, and he fairly revelled in his work. With two such hard-working backs as Clifford and McCurdy in front of him, he was generally able to get a good sight of the ball before it reached him. Still, he often had to be as quick as a cat to gather it in time. But he never made a mistake, and generally managed to get both hands to it, with the result that his clearances were always effective. In fact, I can't call to mind an occasion in which a goalkeeper has fielded the ball better.

"There were other points in the game, however, which deserve notice, so I must not dwell upon his work any longer. To begin with, Luton looked likely to give the City a lot of trouble. They had a somewhat mixed front rank, and the half-line was also somewhat of an experiment. Still, they played with such spirit that they made a great deal of every chance that went their way. The one thing they lacked was shooting power. On the other hand, the City have rarely done better in front of goal. They shot whenever they had the chance, and shot straight and hard, too, without being able to beat Ord. During the interval it was found that Saxton had dislocated his left elbow. Early in the game he and Back went for the ball together, and he got the foot of the tall back against his shoulder, and in falling sustained the injury mentioned. He had to receive surgical treatment, and did not turn out in the second half.

"This handicapped Luton had to get almost

half.

"Thus handicapped, Luton had to act almost entirely on the defensive. So well did their backs play that the City could only score one goal. The pressure was so well maintained that Toone only handled the ball three times. In the last two minutes, when the visitors made a last desperate effort to draw level, he was hard pressed, but kept his charge intact. So Luton lost by one goal to nil. No side could have played a pluckier game. It was bad enough to take the field with such a weak eleven, and then to lose a man before the match was half over made their position doubly trying. Still they did not relax their efforts, and only missed dividing the honours with their powerful opponents.

The "Morning Leader" correspondent says:—"Luton were the first club to lower the colour of Bristol City in the Southern League this season, so their supporters have itched with impatience to see them get their own back. Consequently last Saturday a gate of well over 6,000 assembled at St. John's-lane to witness the feat and though they eventually had that pleasure, it for a long time looked as if the luxury was to be denied them, whilst just before the final whistle was piped Luton got so dangerously near equalising, and with only ten men, that the game will certainly rank as one of the most sensational played this season by the City. And why? Simply because they encountered not only the Luton backs and halves at the top of their form, but Ord in a mood that was quite extraordinary. No matter where the shots came from nor the pace, Ord was there, and in the end the City won by a bare 1 to nil, where on the play they ought to have got home by fully 5 clear goals."

A report of the game from an eye-witness reaches me, and from this it appears that Saxton was hurt in the first twenty minutes, though he kept on playing till the interval. Brown and Durrant had good chances of scoring in the first half, after getting right through, but shot lamely, and Part actually sent in a fine shot, which struck the crossbar underneath. Toone just reached the ball, and it fell down against the upright where Brown stood, but the custodian managed to turn it behind. In the last two minutes of the game Luton got the ball on to the goal-line, and though there were three men up, they could not get it through. Bristol's goal, I am told, was more than doubtful, Geddis being right on the goal-line when he centred to Stevenson. My informant says also that Luton were heartily cheered when they went off the field at half-time, and at the finish they had quite an ovation, the crowd lining up on both sides to cheer them as they passed into the dressing-room.

The "Bristol Evening News," in the course of its comments says: "Spectators of the game might all agree that the City played in a thoroughly capable and business-like style, but the goalkeeping of Ord was extraordinary. No matter how straight or how hard the shots came, he seemed to be always waiting, and not only waiting for but also able to cope with them. It was a masterly display. . . . It does not read as a great performance for the City to have only won by one to nil, especially as Luton were a man short all the second half, and it was during that period that the City's solitary goal was registered. But it was a great performance all the same. The Luton defence to a man was cool, clever, and calculating. They never gave anything away, and had their forwards been in sympathy the corresponding form, the points would not have been monopolised by the City."

Of the other Southern League matches, the most remarkable was that at Southampton, where West Ham led at the interval by 2 goals to nil, but were ultimately beaten by 3 to 2. Millwall accounted for Portsmouth by 3 to 1, and Kettering for Bristol Rovers by 1 to nil, but New Brighton and Watford effected draws at Gravesend and Swindon respectively, the records being one goal all, and at Kansas Rice Reading and the Queen's Park Rangers divided points, there being no score. The following is the League table up to date:—

	Goals				Pts.		
	Pl.	Won.	Lost.	Draw.	For	Against	
Southampton	16	13	2	1	39	18	27
Bristol City	15	11	2	2	38	12	24
Portsmouth	15	10	4	1	35	15	21
Millwall	15	9	5	1	33	21	19
Watford Rovers	15	8	5	2	30	18	18
Reading	14	8	4	2	18	10	15
West Ham	13	8	4	1	19	17	12
New Brighton	14	7	6	1	16	21	12
Tottenham Hotspur	14	8	5	1	15	17	12
Kettering	14	4	7	3	15	25	11
Luton	13	5	7	1	16	20	10
Queen's Park Rangers	14	4	8	2	22	28	10
Swindon	15	3	10	2	18	25	9
Gravesend	15	2	9	4	17	33	8
Watford	13	1	12	1	11	28	4

This table does not include the Chatham results, that club having been disbanded.

Luton, it will be seen, are rather low down on the list, but that is only because they have had so few chances of returning their opponents' attacks at home. As a matter of fact, we have had only two Southern League matches on the Bury Park ground during the last three months, a truly extraordinary state of affairs. There were only three on the list then, and Chatham dropped out reduced the number to two. What on earth we should have done to keep up the interest of the Club was had not favoured us, goodness only knows.

A glance at the League table will show that the four clubs immediately above Luton have very little to boast about. Kettering are well ahead, have played one more match, and New Brighton and Tottenham Hotspur have only a couple of points to show for an equal number of games. With ordinary luck, Luton should still be at a good position.

Another "goal"
Bury Park ground. The Cup tie on the
two most important matches of the season, so
far as Bury is concerned. The Bristol Rovers
of goal to induce Luton to forego the choice
of goal, but the half field was not suffi-
ciently attractive. Indeed it would have taken
very big bait to have done the trick.

Unfortunately, the Lutonians are not in the
best of trim for this encounter, Lindsay and
Blessington both being doubtful starters at the
time of writing, whilst Sexton, of course, is quite
out of the question. Burbage is available, and
Tierney, who left us earlier in the season, having
expressed a desire to return, has been requisitioned
for the position of inside-left. The team
will therefore be chosen from the following:—
Ord, Lindsay, McCurdy, Clifford, Farr, Hold-
stock, Williams, Brown, Blessington, F. Hawkes,
Burbage, Barker, Tierney, and Durrant.