

Football.

THE SOUTHERN LEAGUE.

LUTON TOWN v. SWINDON.

Played at Luton on Saturday. Result:—

Luton Town	2 goals.
Swindon	1 goal.

The teams were as follow:—

Luton: Ord; White and McCurdy; Clifford, Cox, and Williams; Durrant, Blessington, Gray, Tierney, and Saxton.

Swindon: Menham; Ritchie and Stephenson; Richardson, Downie, and McEleney; Brown, Davies, Kirton, Logan, and Oakley.

Referee, Mr. J. Starke.

There was a great deal of uncertainty in the public mind as to whether the match between Luton and Swindon really would come off on Saturday. After the announcement that the game would be played despite the foolish request of the Emergency Committee of the Football Association, a statement appeared in one of the London papers that all Southern League matches were scratched, and consequently people scarcely knew what to believe.

No doubt it was this uncertainty which accounted for the small gate—not more than fifteen hundred spectators putting in an appearance—though the fact that the Swindon management had called their players together on Thursday night to see whether they should throw up the sponge at once or make an effort to continue to the end of the season, did not add to the attractiveness of the fixture.

Perhaps the most satisfactory feature of the game was the annexing of the two points by Luton. The display of football was certainly not of a fascinating character, and the excitement produced was not enough to make one feel proof against the biting wind that blew across the ground, and caused the occupants of the grand stand to seek for comfort at the rear of that not over-protected structure.

Luton won the toss, but if anything their opponents had the advantage of the elements in the first half. The homesters started off in promising fashion, and had Durrant been a little more effective with Blessington's passes, the probability is that Luton would have done some damage in the first two or three minutes. McCurdy got very near the mark with a shot taken on the ball being turned over to him from a free kick, and then Blessington worked his way through beautifully, passed to Durrant, who centred, and Tierney opened the account with a splendid shot which glanced off the upright into the net.

If Luton had only kept on as they began, there would have been a plentiful crop of goals, but, alas, they fell away sadly. From a centre by Durrant, Gray had a good opportunity, but he missed the ball, and a curling shot by Durrant from a middle by Saxton passed just by the opposite post. Swindon then took a turn, and a faulty kick by McCurdy looked bad, but White managed to clear. Tierney was next responsible for some smart play, and Saxton nearly scored, Menham only just succeeding in frustrating his intention.

After that came an exhibition of almost unaccountable weakness on the part of the Luton defence, and Swindon profiting thereby, and a centre coming across from the right, three of the visiting forwards had the goal all to themselves, except that Ord still remained on duty. Kirton took the kick and Roger reached the ball but could not hold it. Thus the teams were again on level terms. Luton appealed for offside, but the referee, after consulting one of the linesmen, allowed the goal.

A minute or two later, Swindon came very near scoring again, Kirton getting a clear field, and running the ball to within easy shooting distance, but then, to the intense relief of the spectators, he shot high over the bar. Clifford transferred the play to the other end, and gave Gray another opening, but again the centre-forward was found wanting. Blessington shot just over, but directly afterwards the ball was brought back again, and Saxton put in a lovely centre, which Gray received in the mouth of goal, but Menham succeeded in saving.

Luton had a bit more hard luck almost immediately, Blessington heading against the crossbar from a good return by McCurdy. Menham next had to save from both Durrant and Tierney, and then the whistle blew for half-time, the teams thus crossing over with honours easy.

The game had scarcely been re-started, when Luton certainly deserved to score through Durrant. The ball came across from the left, and Durrant receiving close in, took steady aim and sent in a tremendous shot, but luckily for Swindon, Menham happened to be in the way, and the ball ran right up him and over the bar. The corner was unproductive, but Luton came again, and Tierney sending the ball through a forest of legs, Gray at the second attempt got it into the net.

Once or twice after this, the visitors threatened danger, but by far the greater part of the play took place on Swindon territory. Luton, however, were unable to increase their score, and the game ended in a win by two goals to one—Luton's first Southern League victory since the first day of December.

Tierney was again the most successful of the Luton forwards, but Blessington showed signs of a welcome return to form, and his display was the best since his illness. Saxton gave a very fair exhibition, and a few of his centres were splendidly judged, whilst Durrant was a comparative frost in the early part, but better later on. Gray was not so good as on his first appearance, but I fancy he got hurt a bit in the first quarter of an hour.

Clifford was the best of the halves, but Williams put in some dashing work, and Cox was considerably better than on some previous occasions. He would be better still if he would keep his hands off opposing players, and not run the risk of fouls for a technical breach of the rules. The back play was rather rocky, White making several bad misses, and McCurdy not always displaying the soundest of judgment. Ord had less to do than usual, but he did it very well, and I don't think he could be blamed for the shot which he failed to hold.

Swindon are not a great team, by any means, but their performance showed no signs of the fact that they were on half-pay. They worked hard all the way through. Kirton and Brown were the best of the forwards, and the backs were pretty good, while Menham was a tower of strength in goal.

Strange to say, the supply of referees for this match exceeded the demand. Mr. F. S. Walford was originally appointed, but Mr. Whitaker afterwards sent to say that Mr. Starke was coming, and the result was that both gentlemen turned up. Evidently someone had blundered, and the question is, who is going to pay the piper?

Readers will be glad to hear that Lindsay, who has been undergoing a course of treatment from a well-known London specialist, is to be turned out fit and well by the end of this week. Needless to say, no one is more pleased than Lindsay himself.