

SOUTHERN LEAGUE.

LUTON TOWN v. BRISTOL ROVERS.

AN UNLUCKY DEFEAT.

The return match in the above League with the Rovers from Bristol was looked forward with interest by Luton football supporters, as it was confidently expected that the home team would avenge the defeat sustained at Luton on January last when the Rovers ousted them from the English Cup competition, and also the defeat at Bristol in the League on November last, when Luton were unlucky to lose by the only goal of the match after having the bulk of the play. On Saturday, however, Luton were defeated by the only goal scored, and although the home team had to play with only 10 men the greater part of the second half, owing to Clifford twisting his knee, they were decidedly unlucky to lose the match.

There were about 2,000 present when the teams turned out in splendid weather, although a strong wind was blowing down the ground. The heavy rain during the morning had made the ground a trifle sticky, but otherwise it was in good condition. The Bristol eleven was the same that defeated Luton in the English Cup, with the exception that Williams played vice Clark at outside-right, while Luton were minus Saxton and Holdstock, their places being taken by Brown and F. Hawkes. Barker was entrusted with the centre position. The teams lined up as follows, under the direction of Mr. H. G. Walker, of Reading:—

Luton: Ord; Lindsay and White; F. Hawkes, Clifford and Williams; Durrant, Blessington, Barker, Tierney and Brown.

Rovers: Gray; Kifford and Griffiths; Davies, Robertson and Neilson; Williams, Jones, Boucher, Griffiths and Paul.

The visitors won the toss, and Luton kicked off in face of a strong wind and the sun. Luton were the first to get dangerous. Kifford had to clear from Durrant, and the Rovers got away and Paul sent the ball across goal-mouth finely, but his partners missed it, and the ball went behind. Brown forced a corner after pretty play by Tierney, but the ball was got away and Barker shot behind. Williams cleared well from Jones, and Brown missed at the other end, while a foul against Neilson was cleared and Barker skimmed the bar with a lovely shot. The Rovers forced a corner, but Williams cleared, and a foul against Tierney was futile.

The Rovers again attacked, and pretty play by Jones resulted in Ord having to save smartly from Williams. A foul against Luton just outside the penalty line was got away by the home team, and Brown getting possession, made a fine run, causing Kifford to concede a corner, but a foul against Williams spoilt the chance. The visitors gained a fruitless corner, while Brown put over a nice centre from Durrant, and a foul against the latter was cleared by White. Boucher shot over when in a good position, and hands against Neilson availed Luton nothing, while Jones shot behind after Ord had saved from Williams.

The home team up to now had had by far the best of the exchanges, and it was only the bad luck that attended their efforts that kept them from scoring on more than one occasion. The Rovers, however were more successful, as from a break-away by the left wing, Paul put across a grand centre, and while Luton were vainly appealing for offside, Williams dashed up and beat Ord with a fine "header," thus opening the score after 35 minutes' play. Nothing daunted by this reverse, Luton played up well, and Barker shot over a fine centre by Durrant, while directly after Blessington badly missed a centre from the former player. Gray cleared from Brown, and Ord saved finely from Paul at the other end, while directly after Gray saved marvellously from Blessington. Jones shot behind just as the half-time whistle went, leaving the score:—

BRISTOL ROVERS, 1; LUTON, 0.

The teams did not leave the field, and re-started almost directly. Luton attacked at once, and Blessington forced Gray to give a corner with a grand shot, but the ball was cleared, as was another corner directly after. A foul against Gray for carrying the ball was got away, and just as Luton were pressing hotly, another misfortune befel them, as Clifford, in trying to clear the ball, collided with Neilson, and had to leave the field with a twisted knee, Luton thus having only 10 men. The home team now played the one back game, and the Bristol forwards were constantly thrown offside, although the referee should have been more sharp upon the infringement, and got into disfavour at times with the crowd for some of his decisions.

A bad foul on Durrant by Neilson was given offside when in a good position, as was Tierney a moment later. Kifford cleared from Blessington. Gray saved well from Tierney, while Davies relieved by kicking out. This the Bristol defenders did not hesitate to do at every possible opportunity. Brown forced a corner, but the same player shot behind after Durrant had put in finely from the corner kick. A foul against the Rovers was nicely placed by Lindsay, but to the disappointment of the crowd Brown missed the ball altogether, and the chance was lost.

As the end approached, Luton penned their opponents in their own half, and it was only the stubborn defence of the Rovers, coupled with very hard lines at times, that prevented them from equalising. Gray cleared from a mis-kick by Robertson, and Blessington shot over. However, all their efforts to score were frustrated, and the Rovers retired lucky winners with the score unaltered:—

NOTES.

Luton's ill-luck was continued on Saturday. They have this year been unable to place the same eleven in the field on two consecutive Saturdays owing to injuries or some other drawback, and this accounts in great measure for the team's indifferent displays. On Saturday week Holdstock, after having recovered from an injury, turned out at New Brompton to play, but after ten minutes he had to be carried off, and on Saturday Clifford was the unfortunate individual to get disabled

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The game with the Bristol Rovers was far in advance of the cup-tie played between the teams, and at times some really good play was exhibited. If Luton had shot with more accuracy in front of goal they would have won easily, for they were far too good for the Rovers in mid-field, the latter rarely crossing the half-way line during the second half, although Luton had only 10 men.

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For Luton, Ord in goal had not much to do, but some fine saves on one or two occasions. Lindsay was in fine fettle at back, his place-kicks being very good, and causing the Rovers' defence some anxiety. White played a fair game, but he is hardly good enough for League football. The half-backs also played a good game, Williams being the pick. Clifford was also playing a fine game until his injury, while F. Hawkes, although on the small side, put in effective work.

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Of the forwards, Tierney and Blessington were best, and tried hard to break through the visitor's defence. Durrant played a good game on the wing, but should centre earlier instead of taking the ball into the corner. Barker, in the centre, tried hard, but could not get on much against Robertson. Brown played a fair game, but his missing the ball in the second half was unfortunate. The great fault of the Luton forwards is their shooting.

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Gray, the Rovers' goalie, is a smart man, and greatly distinguished himself. The backs, at times, were very erratic in their kicking. The half-backs are the mainstay of the team, and they are a fine trio of defenders. Robertson played well at centre-half, and Davies was reliable. The forwards are quick and dangerous when getting away. Boucher showed a fine turn of speed, but he found Clifford too much for him.

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The right wing is the strongest, Jones and Williams playing a beautiful game together, and the former showed some fine individual football. Paul, on the extreme left, was instrumental in scoring the only goal of the match. Griffiths, his partner, was kept in check by Williams. Some of the referee's decisions were open to cavil.

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To-morrow (Saturday) Luton journey to Reading for the first match in the Southern

League this season, and unless the players on the injured list make rapid recovery, cannot hope for victory. The Reading eleven are just now in fine trim, though on Saturday they lost at Watford by 1-0.