

THE SOUTHERN LEAGUE.

READING v. LUTON TOWN.

Played at Reading on Saturday. Result:—

Luton Town	1 goal.
Reading	nil.

The teams were as follow:—

Reading: Cotton; Sharp and Clinch; Bull, Holt, and Mainman; Evans, Logan, Pangbourne, Spence, and Barnes.

Luton: Ord; Street and Lindsay; White, Cox, and Williams; Durrant, Blessington, Barker, Hawkes, and Brown.

Referee, Mr. B. M. Lockyer; linesmen, Messrs. Gilroy and Whittaker.

Luton have created many surprises in the football world during their existence as a professional organisation, but I should say that never have they given their supporters such a regular startler, and such a welcome one, as on Saturday, when they went to Reading and fairly took the biscuit by beating the Discoteers. It is true that Reading have not set the Thames on fire this season, so far as Southern League engagements go, but their Cup-tie form has been something phenomenal.

Was it not Reading who vanquished Bristol Rovers, the team who have beaten Luton on three separate occasions this season? And was it not Reading, also, who disported themselves on the classic soil of Lancashire to such good effect that the Bolton Wanderers had to acknowledge defeat by a goal to nil?

Why if Luton had been able to send their very best team into Berkshire on Saturday there would have been a hope rather than an expectation that they would gain, say, a solitary point at Reading's expense, but when we remember that McCurdy has gone, and that Holdstock and Clifford and Tierney were unable to turn out, the fact that under these circumstances Luton went and saw and conquered is marvellous indeed.

And it was not a fluke victory either. It was a victory obtained by good play and sound generalship. While there was a goal to be got, Luton went for all they were worth and got it. While there was a goal to be saved, Luton defended for all they were worth and saved it.

Luton were the first to attack, and after Brown had put behind, a pretty piece of work by the forwards took them to the front again, where Barker headed to Durrant, Durrant sent across to Brown, and the latter called upon Cotton to handle. Reading made a run on the left, and soon afterwards Ord had to save from Evans. Then Brown got away in good style, but was twisted off the ball by Sharp just before he could get in his centre.

Considerable amusement was caused by Cox, who accidentally knocked Harry Williams over just as the latter was making a dash to clear, and Reading were thus given a fair opening, but the ball went behind. When the game had been in progress about twenty minutes, Luton forced a corner off Sharp, and Brown dropped the ball right in the middle of the crowd of players in the mouth of goal. It bobbed about on half-a-dozen heads, and then came out to Hawkes, who was standing some six yards back, and the Luton lad shot a nice goal, quite out of Cotton's reach.

Luton, it should be stated, were handicapped in this half by the loss, practically speaking, of Durrant's services. Durrant was very unwell, and though he performed very creditably in the first half, and kept on the field all the way through, it was very little he could do in the second forty-five. Had he been up to the mark, Luton would undoubtedly have added to the score.

It happened in this way. Brown raced nearly the whole length of the ground, beating Mainman, who had gone back in the place of Sharp, and was drawing in near goal when Clinch closed in upon him. Instead of making a dash for goal, Roland passed across to where, under the usual conditions, Durrant would have had a clear field, but unfortunately Durrant had not been able to keep up and so the chance was lost, the ball going out of play.

Lindsay was very prominent during this half. Indeed, he had been throughout the game, but he was emphatically a tower of strength in the latter portion, and put in some mighty kicks. Time after time he landed the ball clean over the heads of the spectators, and though those self same spectators hooted while the game was on and while Reading's chances of drawing level were being frustrated, they turned round and heartily cheered the Luton captain as soon as play was over.

Once only did Evans, by far the most dangerous of the Reading forwards, succeed in fairly getting by Lindsay, and then he appeared to have the goal at his mercy, but Ord dashed out and took the ball clean off the man's toe—one of the cleverest of the many clever saves that Roger has placed to his credit.

About a quarter of an hour before the finish, Holt did a very reprehensible thing after he had been beaten by Williams, ramming his head in the Luton half-back's face, a performance for which he received a talking-to from the referee. Williams did not retaliate, but he afterwards indulged in a number of fouls on his own account, and Luton, who were very freely penalised for their infringements, gave, during this last fifteen minutes, half-a-score of free kicks within twenty yards of goal. But Reading were so hustled about that their shooting was terribly erratic, and apart from the occasion when Ord saved from Evans, and once when Lindsay headed out a hot shot, they never looked like scoring.

As I have said, Lindsay was the greatest factor in Luton's success, and after him came Ord, who, however, had not so much to do as on the previous Saturday against Bristol Rovers. Street also gave his best show, and played a very good game. Williams was the best of the halves, though the others did not do badly. Cox, apart from one or two of his eccentricities, doing some very good work. Blessington was the best of the forwards, and Brown also played a very smart game. Roland was nicely led by Hawkes, and Barker, who was at times a bit weak, was responsible for some very pretty passes.

As to Reading, Evans was a long way the best of the forwards, and Clinch, at back, was the strongest man in defence. Holt put in a lot of work at half-back, but his tactics were not always above suspicion. The refereeing was very good, and there was not a single offside decision on either side questioned throughout the game.