

Football.

THE SOUTHERN LEAGUE.

LUTON TOWN v. NEW BROMPTON.

Played at Luton on Saturday. Result:—

Luton Town	4 goals.
New Brompton	2 goals.

The teams were as follow:—

Luton—Ord; Street and Clifford; Hawkes, White, and Williams; Durrant, Blessington, Barker, Tierney, and Brown.

New Brompton—Ambler; Robertson and Humphrey; Innes, Atherton, and Neames; Hulmes, Macdonald, Frettingham, Haywood, and Seeley.

Referee, Mr. S. R. Carr.

The clerk of the weather has behaved very unkindly to Luton this season, and on Saturday the elements were again unpropitious—so much so indeed that the gate was about the smallest this season, barely a thousand persons turning out to witness the game. The ground, too, was in a terrible state, the greater part of the pitch being reduced to a quagmire. There were patches of green at the corners, but elsewhere there was nothing but mud, mud, mud.

Owing to the inability of some of the Reserves to make the journey to Rothwell for the United League match, Cox, who was originally chosen to play for the first eleven, had to go with the Reserves, and for the New Brompton match the very risky experiment of playing Clifford at back had to be adopted. Clifford had turned out the previous week in the friendly at Bedford, and had failed, and it was therefore almost too much to hope that he would be able to do himself justice in a League engagement.

As a matter of fact, he did quite as well as could reasonably have been expected, but all the same for that he was anything but a tower of strength, and several times his misses or mis-kicks made things look exceedingly awkward for Luton. He stood the game out, however, and with the confidence gained thereby, he will probably show something like his proper form at the next time of asking.

The game began at four o'clock, and Luton at once took up the attack, Brown making the running from a pass by Tierney, and putting in a lovely centre, from which a goal might easily have resulted. Then Tierney worked the ball through to the very goal-line, but by some means or other, Ambler managed to get it out of danger. The right wing next got going, and after Durrant had placed on the net, Blessington, following on a shot by Tierney, had an open goal, but sent the ball right over. The Bromptonians responded, and Frettingham got clear, and from a rebound, succeeded in netting the ball, but the whistle had previously gone for hands.

Luton retaliated, but the visitors once more broke away, and from a foul against Street, a corner resulted. Hulmes placed, and Clifford stopped the ball with his arm, an offence for which New Brompton appealed for a penalty, but the infringement had apparently escaped the referee's eye. Directly afterwards, however, Frettingham, profiting by a misunderstanding and want of smartness on the part of the Luton backs, slipped through and scored a good goal.

This was rather ominous and rather disheartening into the bargain, for the homesters had had by far the best of the play up to this point, and happily they continued to do so afterwards. Luton almost immediately forced a corner, and Durrant, placing well, Tierney put in a beautiful shot, which Ambler just managed to tip over. Brown took the corner kick, and a scrimmage ensued, but a foul against Luton relieved. Then from a throw-in, Hawkes transferred to Barker, who put across to Tierney, and the latter scored with a splendid shot.

There was naturally a great deal of cheering at this, but a little later on there was excitement of a less pleasing character. When, for instance, Frettingham again got through, people held their breath a bit, and there was an outburst of cheering when Ord saved and cleared his shot in fine style. After Ambler had saved a shot from Blessington at the other end, a miskick by Clifford gave Seeley a grand opening, but his shot went wide of the mark. The play up to the interval was perhaps evenly divided, taken altogether, but there was more than one occasion upon which New Brompton looked very dangerous, owing to the somewhat rocky way in which the Luton defence was going.

The teams crossed over with honours easy, and a couple of fouls against Luton were the first things of note in the second half. From one of these Frettingham seemed bound for a goal all over, but fortunately the ball was sent behind. One or two other narrow squeaks the Luton goal had, and then great amusement was caused by the way in which Ord, from a back pass by Clifford, eluded Frettingham, who went clean head over heels. The amusement was succeeded by something better, for Luton going away, Tierney took a centre before it reached the ground, and with the cleanest shot imaginable, scored a magnificent goal.

The visitors, notwithstanding this reverse, continued to play up with great pluck, and Seeley, getting to close quarters, threatened danger, but Ord saved at the expense of a corner. From another attack, the ball went backwards and forwards in front of the Luton goal in a most alarming manner, but at last Williams cleared with a big kick. From hands against Williams, however, Brompton again got into the neighbourhood of the Luton goal, and it looked all up when a foul by Street within the twelve yards line resulted in a penalty being given.

This was taken by Frettingham, whose reputation as a dead shot made the spectators take it for granted that the equalising goal would come. The centre forward, amid breathless excitement, kicked, and kicked hard, and his shot was well directed. It appeared to be going quite out of Ord's reach, but Roger's fist shot out and the ball was stopped. There was enthusiastic applause, and it was renewed when it was seen that Ord had got back into goal soon enough to frustrate the efforts of the left wing.

He had to give a corner, but Clifford eventually cleared, and Luton making tracks for the other end, the ball went across from the right to Brown, who was left to himself, and was able to put on a third goal with a smart shot. The linesman had been inclined to give Roland off-side, but after half putting up his flag, he thought better of it, and as Mr. Carr had no doubts, the goal counted. This seemed to make the game safe, but presently the Bromptonians made a spirited assault, and Hulmes scored with a shot which hit the post and glanced off into the net. The Luton defence was wanting again on this occasion.

Luton made a very determined response, and Tierney got in a couple of beautiful shots, following which Barker sent just wide. Then Luton got going again from a big kick by Clifford, and Brown heading to the centre, Tierney shot another grand goal, the ball going in at such a rate that it forced its way clean through the net. There was nothing further of interest, and the game ended in a well-deserved victory for the homesters.

Thanks for the win are chiefly due to Tierney, who was the best forward on the field. Since he has taken to freely parting with the ball, and shooting when opportunity serves, Tierney has improved out of all knowledge, and on present form is the most deadly shot we have in the team. Barker played a smarter game than usual, and the other forwards gave a pretty good account of themselves, though the right wingers are a bit inclined to over-do the passing, and Blessington particularly would be more effective if he shot a little oftener.

Of the half-backs, I think young Hawkes played the best football. White was evidently somewhat stale, which is not to be wondered at considering the amount of work he has recently put in, and Williams was a trifle too circuitous in his methods to be up to his regular standard. The backs, as I have said, were not always reliable, but Ord was great in goal. The visitors were a smart and persevering team, Frettingham being the brightest star. Haywood also played well, the halves and backs were a good average lot, and Ambler did some capital work in goal, not one of the shots that scored giving him a chance.