

The Southern League.

LUTON TOWN v. WELLINGBOROUGH.

Played at Luton on Saturday. Result:—

Luton Town	1 goal.
Wellingborough	nil.

The teams were as follow:—

Luton: Ord; Lindsay and Sharp; Hawkes, White, and Williams; Durrant, Blessington, Brown, Tierney, and Colvin.

Wellingborough: Baldry; Hood and Atterbury; Draycott, Martin, and Howard; Gall, Turner, Pugh, Busby, and Marriott.

Referee, Mr. A. Milward (London); linesmen, Messrs. H. E. Edwards (London) and S. J. Brightwell (Rushden).

Luton's first Southern League match of the season was played at home on Saturday under the most favourable conditions, except perhaps that the ground was a little too hard for the comfort of the players. It was a beautifully fine afternoon, and the crowd reached very respectable dimensions, numbering, as it did, between three and four thousand persons.

Wellingborough is not exactly a name to conjure with at Luton, the teams performing on behalf of the Northamptonshire club not always having been of the strongest possible character. But with election to the Southern League, a determined effort has been made to bring Wellingborough football up to a higher level, and with what success is evidenced by the draw in the first match at West Ham, and again by the capital display given on Saturday.

Luton won the game, it is true, but perhaps they were a trifle fortunate in so doing, for though they had the greater number of chances, there were times when the spectators had a very uncomfortable time of it. The Luton spectators, by the way, play very little part in winning matches, for they cheer like mad when cheering is not wanted—that is, when goals are being scored—and they withhold their encouragement when encouragement is most needed.

I am not one of those who like to see spectators applauding every effort of the home team and jeering at the play of the visitors, but I am still more opposed to the ironical applause which is lavished on the homesters when their efforts go awry, and when the opposition encountered is stronger than was anticipated.

It was a disappointment, no doubt, that Luton did not make mincemeat of Wellingborough, as they have done on some previous occasions, but then, as I have already indicated, the Wellingborough of to-day are not to be compared with the Wellingborough of any other period. They are infinitely stronger than ever they were before, and their extremely energetic and dashing play on Saturday made it very difficult for Luton to show anything like effective combination.

The visitors started off with a rush, and the surprising thing was that they were able to keep up the pace as they did right through the game. But on the whole, the balance was in favour of Luton, who, despite a little weakness here and there, made a very creditable show, and were deserving of the victory which ultimately fell to them.

In the early stages of the game, Luton made a strong attack on the Wellingborough goal, and from a centre by Durrant, Tierney headed wide, whilst directly after a return from Lindsay was headed behind by one of the visiting backs. Nothing came of the corner, and Wellingborough got away on the left, but were circumvented by White, and another rush was stopped in fine style by Lindsay. Ord, however, was called upon to save a little later, and then Luton getting away, Brown received from the right and put in a grand shot, which Baldry only just succeeded in negotiating.

Fouls against the Luton centre-forward spoiled two or three assaults on the Wellingborough goal, and then a mistake by Sharp at the other end let in Gall, who, however, sent wide. A foul against the visitors once more turned the tide in Luton's favour, and Sharp placing well, Colvin put in a hot and well-directed shot, but unfortunately for the homesters, it rebounded off Hood. A moment's excitement was next caused by Pugh, who, by a fine effort, got between the two opposing backs, only to find Ord one too many for him.

Then a curious thing happened. Luton, after an unsuccessful corner, went down the field again, and Tierney tried a long shot. The ball appeared to be going some foot or two outside, but Baldry ran out to make sure, and to everyone's surprise, the ball, when it pitched, broke in in most astonishing fashion and rolled into the net. It would, in cricket, be known as a break from the off, but the bowler who could cultivate such a break as this would be worth his weight in gold to any eleven.

After this, Luton had much the better of the play up to the interval, and several times looked like adding to their score, once in particular getting the ball on to the very goal-line, and the Wellingborough custodian saving by a miracle, as it were. Half-time arrived, however, with the record remaining at one to nil in favour of the home team.

Resuming, Luton at once made tracks for the Wellingborough headquarters, being helped on the way by Lindsay and Tierney, and Blessington eventually transferring to Durrant, the latter shot the wrong side of the net. Then from a foul against Sharp, Gall received and middled beautifully, but Pugh, when right in front of goal, put high over. Luton at once retaliated, and Brown getting through prettily from a throw-in, passed to Blessington, who passed again, and the centre-forward just skimmed the bar.

The visitors responding, Sharp gave a corner, from which Blessington cleared, and Durrant making a gallant effort, almost worked his way right through the opposing defence, but was robbed at the last moment. Ord next had to clear from Gall, who made a couple of capital attempts on the Luton goal, and Roger's second clearance was a very fine one indeed.

The Wellingborough tactics, at this time, were of a very energetic kind, and one of their number received a well-merited admonition from the referee. The play was very evenly divided, both goals being attacked in turn. From a corner obtained by Brown, Tierney headed in and another corner resulted, but was not turned to account. From a foul on Durrant, Lindsay placed well, and Williams headed over.

A grand run by Colvin afterwards threatened to bring about the downfall of the Wellingborough goal, but Baldry saved from Tierney's header. After an interval caused by the behaviour of some persons on the terraces calling for a reprimand from the referee, Brown, receiving from Durrant, put in a shot which just missed the upright.

There was plenty of incident in the play right up to the finish, but the efforts of Luton on the one hand to increase their score, and the efforts of Wellingborough on the other to equalise, were of no avail, and the match ended in a win for the home team by the narrow margin of a goal.

The game was a hotly-contested one from start to finish, and with such a display of energy it necessarily followed that some of the finer points of combination were missing. There was a little weakness in the Luton team, and it was in the failure of the young half-backs to follow up the advantages gained by the forwards. But this is a failing which no doubt will soon be overcome. Hawkes and White vastly improved last season after gaining full confidence in themselves, and have done better had they shown a little more too.

Williams, of course, was not wanting in this respect, and perhaps the fact that he gave Gall rather too much elbow room was the only thing militating against a fine display. The backs both played up strongly, but Lindsay, who was at his best, was the more reliable of the two. Indeed, he appeared never to be beaten. Ord also performed well between the sticks.

Strange to say, Colvin was the weakest man in the front string, and during the earlier part of the game it seemed that nearly all his efforts went wrong. Durrant, who got a nasty shaking in the first half, was in wonderfully good form, and Blessington and Tierney both worked cleverly and well. Brown, on the whole, gave a pretty sound display, but the forwards altogether would have done better had they shown a little more confidence in their shooting abilities.

As for the visiting team, there is no doubt they are a very capable lot, and barring accidents, are not likely to be at the bottom of the League table towards the end of the season. The backs are a decidedly strong pair, Hood shaping particularly well, and the half-backs took a lot of beating. Gall proved himself a very persevering player on the right wing, and Pugh at centre was always on the look-out for openings. But the team is a good one all round.

Referring to the Beds County Football Association, the "Herts Express" says: "Except in the town and neighbourhood of Luton very little is heard of this organisation, whose title is indeed something of a misnomer. The management of the Association has from its formation been in the hands of Lutonians, and hence we have the absurdity year after year of the Luton Reserves, a professional team, being allowed to enter the county cup competition and winning it with farcical ease from some village opponent.

"Apparently the absurdity at last struck even the executive, for we note that at the recent annual meeting of the Association 'it was suggested that a new cup competition ought to be instituted as the present cup was practically a gift to the Luton Reserves,' but that 'after a

somewhat lengthy discussion the opinion seemed to be that although the present state of things did not give every satisfaction, it could not very well be improved upon.' And so, if the rural clubs are silly enough to enter, we shall have last year's spectacle repeated over again. It is surprising these clubs do not follow the example recently set them in Hertfordshire, and by joining the Association and attending the meetings in force do something to make the Association more than a name."

It may surprise the writer in the "Express" to know that Barker, of Hitchin, is at present the only professional among the Luton Reserves.

The other Southern League matches resulted in a very satisfactory manner, tending, as they do, to preserve the open character of the competition. Southampton, at home, for instance, could only make a draw with New Brompton at one goal each, Portsmouth were beaten at Kettering by a goal to nil, and Watford afforded some evidence of their determination not to be at the tail end this year by visiting the Queen's Park Rangers and beating them by a goal to nothing.

A tough encounter at Tottenham ended in a victory for the Spurs over Millwall by 2 goals to nil, West Ham United went to Bristol and beat the Rovers by a similar margin, Brentford, the newly-elected, made a pointless draw at Swindon, and at Reading, Northampton, for whom Saxton was playing, were beaten by 3 goals to 1.

T. McInnes, the old Luton man, has signed on for Queen's Works, Bedford, and played for them on Saturday against the Luton Amateurs. Other Luton players who have signed on for the Queen's are H. Farr, T. Hawkes, and Burgess.

It being necessary now to bring the Luton close season fund to a finish, I am requested to ask all those who have books to send them in, or take them to the ground next Monday night at 7.30.

Luton are due at Portsmouth on Saturday next, and will do their very best to give a good account of themselves. It is a big task for them, but if they fail it will not be for the want of trying.

Will secretaries of local football clubs oblige by sending in reports of matches as early as possible. Reports received on Wednesday of matches played on Saturday have to be very much curtailed, or perhaps omitted altogether, owing to pressure of other matter. Such reports should be sent in on Monday, or Tuesday at the latest.

H. Pakes, who has acted as trainer for the Luton Reserves for four seasons, is to have a benefit, and tickets are now on sale for this match. It is that between the Reserves and Hitchin, in the South-Eastern League, and will take place on the Town Ground on Oct. 12th. Pakes does a lot towards getting the team together, and his benefit is well deserved.