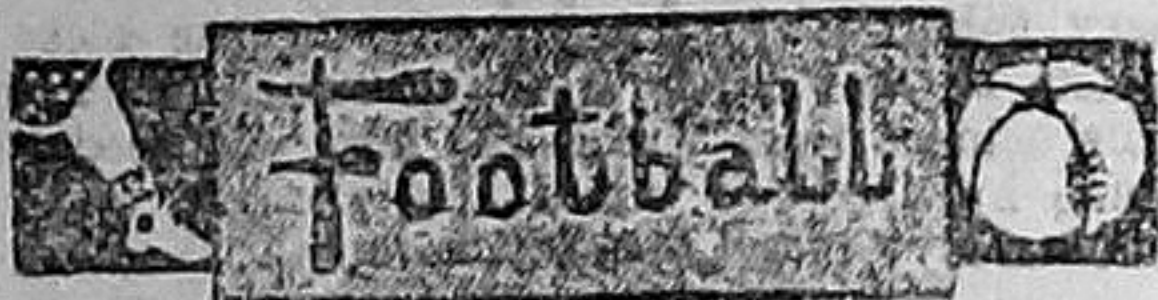




SOUTHERN LEAGUE.

LUTON TOWN v. READING.

A DRAWN GAME.

The visit of the Berkshire champions to Luton on Saturday had been anticipated with interest by the supporters of the home club. The Reading club have met with unqualified success during the past season, both in the League, where they occupy 4th position, and also in the English Cup, though in the latter they fell a victim to Portsmouth. Reading have time to devote themselves to winning the Southern League championship, and have fair prospects of success. Previous to Saturday, the Reading club had played 18 matches, won 11, lost 3, drawn 4, and obtained 26 points out of a possible 36, while they had a goal average of 37 against 14, a very fine record.

Owing to the poor form shown by Ord and Brown at London last week, they were relegated to the Reserves. Goodge was called upon to make his first appearance for the Town Club, while Moody played vice Brown. In the Reading eleven, Holt, the old Everton International, played vice Bull at right half. The weather was dull and threatening and the ground, owing to the thaw, was very slippery. There were about 2,000 present when the referee, Mr. J. W. Bailey, of Leicester, whistled the following 22 into order:

Luton: Goodge; Lindsay and Sharp; F. Hawkes, White and Williams; Durrant, Blessington, Moody, Tierney and Colvin.

Reading: Cotton; Stokes and Clinch; Holt, Watts, and Allison; Evans, Blackwood, Davidson, Griffiths and Barnes.

Lindsay won the toss and elected to defend the railway goal. Davidson started the game, but Luton were the first to attack, Colvin showing up well, while Durrant shot behind a well-timed pass from Blessington. Exchanges were fast and frequent, but neither keeper was tested. Tierney scored a lovely goal for Luton, but a foul on Moody nullified the point, and a penalty should have been awarded for a foul on Colvin, but only a free-kick was given, while hesitation by Moody lost a golden opportunity for opening Luton's account.

Reading now took up the attack, and Goodge nearly lost a "header" from Davidson, but recovered himself just in time. Tierney skimmed the bar with a fine drive, and a breakaway by Davidson looked dangerous, but the ball went behind. Luton forced several ineffective corners and Cotton made some fine saves from all the Luton forwards, while White tested him with two splendid drives, but the keeper was equal to all calls made upon him. Offside against Griffiths nullified a point gained by that player from a centre by Evans, and Goodge luckily cleared from Davidson. Play was confined to mid-field up to the interval and Luton were somewhat unlucky not to have scored, at least, once. Half-time:—

No Score.

On resuming, Luton at once attacked, but Clinch cleared from Durrant, who later missed an open goal. Cotton saved twice and the visitors then had a turn. Williams headed away a fine centre from Barnes, while the referee again failed in his duty by neglecting to award Luton a second penalty against Stokes for fouling Colvin within the 12 yards limit, whereat the crowd showed their disapproval. Luton again renewed the attack and Clinch just got the ball away after Cotton had been charged off the leather by Blessington. Directly afterwards, Durrant secured, and put across a fine centre, which Cotton only partially succeeded in getting rid of; Colvin dashed up and netted the ball, thus giving Luton the lead after 22 minutes from the re-start.

This score considerably enlivened the game, and both teams went at it for all they were worth. Cotton saved from Colvin, and Goodge cleared well from Evans, who failed to stop himself and colliding with the guide rope, had to have his left shoulder attended to. With only 10 men, Reading played the one back game, and this upset the home forwards, who appeared to slacken down. Of this laxity Reading took full advantage. In an attack on the home goal, Barnes, who should have been given offside, was allowed to centre. Goodge failed to get the ball away, and in the scrimmage that followed, Davidson forced the leather over the line just as Evans came on again, thus equalising for Reading. Luton tried hard to regain their lead, but they had shot their bolt, and the game ended:

Luton 1 goal, Reading 1.

NOTES.

The contest was fairly even throughout, and was fought out in a very friendly spirit, there being only three really deliberate fouls during the afternoon. On the day's play, a draw fairly represented the game, as there was but little to choose between the teams. The Reading eleven are a well-balanced lot, who are likely to make a bold bid for the Southern League championship.

With regard to Luton, Goodge, although a little nervous at the outset, made some good saves, and was not to blame for the shot that beat him. He did not have a great deal to do, but certainly gave the impression that with good training and practice he has the making of a smart custodian. By the way, this is the second goal-keeper that the Luton Clarence club have turned out for the service of the Town team, Smart being the other, but he has returned to his old love.

Lindsay played a champion game at back, but he somewhat marred his display by the bad foul he committed on Blackwood—indeed, it was the most deliberate ever seen from the local captain. Otherwise, he checked his wing in fine style. Sharp, who has been playing in first-class style during the last few weeks, was the equal of any back on the field. Time after time he dashed in and cleared when the Reading vanguard had got dangerous, and he never gave the opposing forwards much rest.

Among the halves, White again played well and untiringly. He should try and break himself of the habit he has got of pushing his man, for several fouls were given against him for this infringement. His shooting, too, was well directed, and once or twice caused Cotton some anxiety. Hawkes also did well, tackling and clearing fearlessly, but Williams appeared to be "off," and never seemed to get into his stride. His weakness frequently let in his wing, and consequently extra work devolved upon Sharp.

As to the forwards, Tierney and Durrant were the pick, the former working very hard all through and having hard lines several times in not beating Cotton. Durrant did admirably in the midfield, but his shooting was not of the best, and he should centre a little quicker instead of taking the ball to the corner flag.

Moody played a very good game in the centre, but was rather slow at times. However, he limped badly towards the close owing to a kick received early in the game. Blessington was fair, but he has been seen to better advantage. Colvin played his best game of the season on Luton ground, his goal being a beauty.

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For Reading, Cotton was in grand form. The backs, Clinch, late of Sheffield United, and Stokes, who comes from Burslem Port Vale, were a strong pair. The latter was a little vigorous at times with Colvin, but taking the game through, each played a scrupulously fair game, and cleared their lines on several occasions in an accomplished manner when pressed by the home forwards.

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The halves never gave anything away. Watts stood out very prominently at centre-half, and was a little too much for Moody. The old International, Holt, has seen his best days. He got in some neat work occasionally, but generally found himself beaten by his wing, who were evidently having "a day out." Allison, of New Brighton fame, was very effective. As a line, they compared very favourably with the home trio.

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In the front rank, Reading have a smart quintet, who would make any defence go all the way to keep them at bay. A good leader has been found in Davidson, late of Manchester City, who, although on the heavy side, gets over the ground quite nimbly. The right wing was the stronger of the two, Blackwood and Evans combining very well together. Barnes was very fast, but he and Griffiths found Lindsay a serious obstacle.

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Considering the keenness of the weather, there was a very good "gate." The referee, with the exception of the mistakes he made with the penalty kicks, gave general satisfaction.

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