

FOOTBALL.

LUTON v. READING.

LUCK FOR THE BERKSHIRE MEN.

On Saturday the Reading team visited Luton in order to play their first Southern League fixture with the "blues." The weather was bitterly cold and the turf slippery, but there was a very good muster of spectators, the excellent performances of the visitors no doubt having acted as a draw. The Reading eleven was a fairly strong one, the only change of importance being the inclusion at left-half of International Holt. The home team included two Reserves in the persons of Goodge and Moody, who were introduced as substitutes for Ord and Brown respectively. Both, by the way, gave a good account of themselves.

The teams were:—

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

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

Referee, Mr. J. W. Bailey (Leicester).

Lindsay won the toss and the home lot started with considerable dash. Indeed, the early part of the game ruled altogether in their favour. At one stage Colvin sent the ball into the side of the net, this being a very narrow escape for Cotton. A foul against the home lot drove them back when they were threatening danger. A like decision against the visitors presented Tierney with an opportunity which was not taken advantage of, and almost immediately afterwards Sharp kicked over the bar. Durrant got off in good style, only to steer wide. Later on, Colvin was very badly charged over when within the penalty line and there were confident appeals for a penalty kick. Mr. Bailey consulted the linesmen with the result that a goal kick was awarded. The Reading forwards next had a turn and presented Goodge with a chance of distinguishing himself, which he accepted. Lindsay gave the home front rankers a splendid chance with a well-judged kick, but the forwards passed badly and so missed the opening. Eventually a free-kick against Luton drove them back, and Goodge was called upon to save which he did nicely. Tierney experienced hard luck with a first-rate attempt which barely missed the mark, while a magnificent kick by Sharp, who was exhibiting particularly good style, was warmly applauded. A corner to Luton was not turned to account, nor was a free-kick for a foul near the strangers' goal. Following a like decision against Luton Reading sent through, but the referee ruled that the player who succeeded was offside. Immediately afterwards the home goal had a narrow escape. At the other end a well-judged effort by Colvin caused Cotton to bestir himself; but the Reading custodian had been exhibiting fine form, and on this occasion he behaved admirably. A beauty from the foot of White had the effect of forcing a corner through Cotton. From this the locals very nearly succeeded in scoring, Moody winding up by obtaining another flag-kick. Cotton disposed admirably of a well-intentioned try by Colvin, and afterwards a couple more corners were secured by the home lot. The outcome of a first half in which the home performers had had a good deal the best of matters and in which the Reading side gave an especially disappointing display, was that the positions stood as follows:—

LUTON, 0: READING, 0.

Early in the second period, a grand shot by Durrant travelled tantalisingly across the mouth of the goal and went harmlessly over the line. Close to goal Colvin was badly fouled by Stokes when he appeared to be getting dangerous. There were again appeals for a penalty but all that the official in charge felt justified in giving was a goal-kick. This decision did not by any means please a section of the spectators who loudly expressed their disapprobation. From an excellent centre by Colvin, Durrant sent over the goal. The Reading citadel experienced a very narrow escape from being captured shortly afterwards; Cotton dropped the ball in front of goal and Moody failed to get it through, although there was nobody in front of him at the time. Amends was made for this failure just afterwards, however. The ball was sent in from the right very finely and Colvin pounced upon it and sent it into the net. This success for the home players was enthusiastically received. Goodge cleared well shortly afterwards and then Evans was injured as the result of falling on the ropes at the top end. The affair was an accident, but the player had to retire though he recovered sufficiently to be able to resume later on. During his absence Reading played the one back game and after some muddling play they managed to equalise through the medium of Griffiths Goodge being in no sense to blame. The remainder of the match was only interesting from the fact that Reading displayed far better form than in the first half. The contest was spirited but there were no more goals scored. The final result was a somewhat luck draw (that is for Reading) with these figures:

LUTON, 1: READING, 1.

FOOTBALL FACTS AND FANCIES.

What a pity it is that the Luton players were not in such form as they were on Saturday when they had to meet West Ham a fortnight ago. I have seen them play several games this season, but never better than in Saturday's first half. On that form they would have been good enough to play any team in the country.



Considering the splendid reputation of the Reading players this season I had expected a far better display from them. As it was the home contingent drew and should have won, nothing but sheer ill-luck preventing them from taking both points.



I am not going to enlarge about the sterling football which the locals gave us prior to the interval. We all knew that they could play in this excellent fashion and we had been wondering of late how it was that they did not display somewhat more directness in their efforts. At the same time the outcome of Saturday's game was distinctly creditable to the "blues."



It has been more than once demonstrated this season that the Reading eleven play a determined and vigorous game. They infused a good deal of dash and not a little muscular vigour into their display on Saturday, but they were never what I should like to call rough. The game was just a splendid trial of strength between two resolute and capable teams, and that a few hard knocks should be exchanged was only to be expected.



Those who witnessed the game will agree with me that the home players ought to have won. Their shooting was more accurate than usual, but still not straight enough. Moody on one occasion found himself in front of goal with nobody to beat and then quietly steered outside the post.



Considering that Ord and Brown were both absent and that their places were filled by Reserves, the fact that the locals escaped a beating is to me highly praiseworthy. The youngsters who were introduced performed exceedingly well, especially considering that the turf was very slippery.