

Football.

The Southern League.

LUTON v. SWINDON

Played at Luton on Saturday. Result:

Luton nil.
Swindon nil.

The teams were as follows:

Luton—Fred; Lindsay, and Williams; F. Hawkes, White, and R. Hawkes; Durrant, Blomington, Gall, Moody, and Woods.

Swindon—Hemmings; O'Brien and Jones; Oakden, Bannister, and Cowley; Davis, Poppitt, Neyland, Bullock, and Edward.

Referee, Mr. F. A. Crabtree (Ealing).

It Luton had hard luck, as it is said they did, in being beaten early in the season at Swindon by two goals to one, they had that luck repeated on Saturday only in a much more heart-breaking form. The weather on this occasion was not conducive to good football, the wind being strong and the ground treacherous even at the start. Swindon had the great advantage of the breeze in the first half, but notwithstanding that, Luton were all over the better team, and in the second half there was practically only one side in it—and yet Luton could not score.

There were about a couple of thousand people present when Swindon kicked off. Luton were the first to attack, Woods getting away on the left and eventually forcing a corner, from which nothing accrued. The home team again pressed, and Bob Hawkes sent in a lovely shot, which Hemmings negotiated. Woods then had another opportunity, but instead of putting in a centre, he attempted a shot, and the ball went behind.

Swindon then made a smart response, and Davis became decidedly threatening, but at the crucial moment Frail rushed out and collared the ball right from the man's foot. The custodian fell down, but retained possession of the leather until he could throw it out of danger, a performance which elicited hearty cheers from the spectators.

Luton at once going to the other end, Durrant received from Fred Hawkes and put in a splendid centre, from which Moody headed just wide. Durrant next made a grand run, but finished up weakly. The ball, however, found its way to the front of goal, and Gall had a glorious chance, but he screwed the ball in very tamely, and Hemmings managed to turn it round the post.

Nothing came of the corner, and after Durrant had tried a very decent long shot, Woods had a good opening, and might very well have run the ball right into goal, but apparently his nerve failed him, he hesitated, and that moment's hesitation enabled one of the backs to overtake and tackle him. A foul by Fred Hawkes enabled Swindon to get a look in, but Luton were soon acting on the aggressive again, and a lovely shot by Durrant fully deserved to score. As luck would have it, however, the left back happened to be standing in the mouth of goal, and the ball struck him and went behind.

Again the corner proved fruitless, and a little later, when Durrant secured a clear opening and seemed safe for goal, he slipped on the greasy ground and went down full length, the ball rolling harmlessly away.

After Bob Hawkes had tried a shot, which just missed the uprights, the visitors made a couple of fruitless assaults, and then Luton again renewed their overtures. On one occasion the ball came off one of the Swindon men to Durrant, who once more had a rare chance, but the shot went over the bar. Nothing further of note occurred before the interval, and the teams thus crossed over with a blank sheet.

Little need be said as to the second half. Practically the whole of the play during this portion of the game took place on Swindon territory, the visitors only now and then breaking away. But try as they would, Luton could not score. Shots were rained in from all quarters, but they were not always of the best, owing to the great difficulty which attended the operation.

The ground and the ball had both been tolerably greasy in the first half but during a considerable portion of the second moiety there was a heavy downpour of rain, which thoroughly drenched players, officials, and spectators, and made anything like accurate shooting a practical impossibility. Before the storm had come on, however, Gall threw away a certain goal. He received the ball off the Swindon left back, but instead of passing it on to either Blessington or Durrant, both of whom were on a line with him and absolutely clear, he essayed a shot himself and sent a little wide.

The Swindon goal had numerous other narrow escapes, shots just missing the mark with tantalising frequency. So strongly did Luton press that many times and for long periods the whole of the players, with the exception of Frail, were in the Swindon half, and for twenty minutes or half an hour, Lindsay undertook the whole of the work at back, sending Bob Hawkes forward and Williams half-back, but despite all these efforts the goal so greatly desired and so energetically worked for, would not come, and the game therefore ended in a draw.

Once again, the great weakness in the Luton team was at centre. Gall was slow in getting on the ball, slow when he had obtained possession, and his want of dash frequently enabled the Swindon men to turn an attack. Otherwise, the Luton team played a good, combined game, their superiority in this respect being especially noticeable in the first half when they were playing against the wind.

Woods again played very well, his final efforts only being a bit weak, owing to lack of experience. Moody and the right-wingers gave a good exhibition, and the half-backs performed with their usual success, Bob Hawkes especially playing in grand form. Fred Hawkes conceded quite an unusual number of free kicks. Lindsay was once more a tower of strength at back, not making a single miskick throughout the game, and Williams also gave a very gratifying account of himself, whilst Frail did what was required of him in first-class style.

The best man on the Swindon side was the goalkeeper, Hemmings, who did some very clever work. None of the other men displayed anything out of the ordinary run, and the team altogether are not nearly up to Luton's standard, despite the fact that they have come out of their League engagements in such a satisfactory manner.