

# The Southern League.

## LUTON v. QUEEN'S PARK RANGERS.

Played at Luton on Saturday. Result:—

Luton ..... 1 goal.

Queen's Park Rangers..... nil.

The teams were as follow:—

Luton—Thompson; Bennett and McEwen; F. Hawkes, White, and Williams; Durrant, Eaton, McKee, Storey, and Allsopp.

Queen's Park Rangers—Collins; Archer and Newlands; Bowman, Hitch, and Bull; Hamilton, Abbott, Brown, McGowan, and Murphy.

Referee, Mr. H. Ward (Nottingham); linesmen, Messrs. Tappin (West Ham) and Lynch (Walthamstow).

From a directorial and spectatorial point of view, the weather on Saturday was all that could be desired, but the players no doubt would have been very much better pleased had the influence of the sun been a little less pronounced. As it was, there were many melting moments, and one could not help sympathising with men who had to go at full tilt under such exceedingly trying conditions.

Luton's excellent performances had a great effect upon the attendance, and again there were fully five thousand persons present. These five thousand cheered mightily as McEwen stepped into the arena, for it had been feared that he would not be able to take part in the proceedings. Bob Hawkes, however, was an absentee, not having recovered from the shaking-up he got at Canning Town, and his place was taken by Williams.

Queen's Park Rangers came with a great reputation, for they had been doing exceedingly well, and there are many people who regard them, not without reason, as one of the strongest combinations in the League. When they entered the field, it was seen that they were a very weighty lot, and in this respect had a considerable advantage over the homesters.

McEwen won the toss and elected to kick from the railway end, giving the visitors the advantage of the sun in the expectation of getting the pull in the second half. The game opened remarkably fast, the Rangers evidently meaning to make the most of their opportunities, but Luton were the first to become really dangerous, and it was not long before McKee converted a centre from Allsopp, only to find himself given offside.

Durrant next finished up a good run with a promising centre, but Collins cleared, and when Storey afterwards attempted to get through from a pass by McKee, he was fouled by Archer. Williams undertook the kick, and placed the ball on the net. The visitors made a pretty vigorous response and kept the home defence well on the alert. At last Hamilton dropped the ball in the mouth of goal, and when Thompson fisted away, Brown, from a palpably offside position, shot just by the post.

Thompson afterwards had to clear from a well-judged shot by Bowman, and then Luton going to the other end, Durrant put in a brilliant centre, giving Storey an open goal, but the inside-left muffed it badly, sending the ball high over the bar. Williams followed on with a very good effort, and then the Rangers made several spirited assaults on the home goal, but Thompson performed with such consummate skill that there was never much fear of him being beaten.

The tide turning once again in Luton's favour, McKee forced a corner, and Lands against Archer gave still another opening, but nothing tangible accrued. A little later, Allsopp put in a middle from which Storey looked like scoring, but Collins rushed out and got on to the ball first, thus effecting a clearance. After this both ends were attacked in turn, but the efforts made were not of a sensational character, and half-time arrived with a blank score sheet.

So far, the form of the homesters had not been such as to inspire the spectators with the greatest confidence as to the result, for the play had been pretty evenly divided, and if anything the Rangers had appeared to be slightly the better team. Play, too, had been somewhat interfered with by the large number of free kicks arising from foul throws, or what were regarded as foul throws by the officials, who seemed to be very keen on detecting any infringement in this branch of the business.

When the game was resumed Luton infused much more spirit into their play, and Eaton netted the ball after Collins had saved from McKee, but the latter was given offside. Hamilton was soon down the other end, and getting the better of McEwen, shot across the mouth of goal, only to see Thompson give another exhibition of his smartness by clearing, while a forward, who had tried to bowl him over, went sprawling into the goal.

Williams gave a corner which the visitors failed to turn to account, and then Harry atoned for his mistake by placing the ball nicely forward to Allsopp, who put in a centre which might easily have been converted had the whistle not gone for offside against the inside men. The game was going in ding-dong fashion, and from a centre by Durrant, Storey shot and Eaton headed through, but once again the point was disallowed for offside.

Luton pegging away again, Archer conceded a corner, and Bennett ran through and essayed a shot, but the ball rebounded off one of the defenders. Soon afterwards, Storey failed at another good opening, and after Allsopp had made a fruitless attempt, Archer succeeded in clearing. Eaton, who was showing much greater dash than in the first half, nearly managed to get through, and then McKee forced a corner. Allsopp placed badly, but Luton came again, and whilst Collins had the ball in his hands from a shot by Durrant, McKee charged him over. So far as I could see, there was not a shadow of a doubt as to its being a goal, but strange to say, the referee, after consulting one of the lineamen, ordered a goal kick.

This was decidedly hard lines on the home-eters, for, barring the officials, I think there was scarcely a man on the field who thought there was any room for dispute. Collins seemed to be right under the bar when he saved, and as he was knocked on to the ground backwards, retaining possession of the ball, the referee's ruling came as a great surprise. In the other three cases I think the decisions were correct, but correct or not, it was rather hard luck to get the ball into goal four times and still have nothing to show for it.

Encouraged by their let-off, the Rangers redoubled their efforts, and for a time had rather the better of the exchanges. Then, when there was only about five minutes to go, Durrant found himself in possession of the ball, and travelling for all he was worth, he finished up with a brilliant centre, which Storey breasted through.

The enthusiasm was tremendous when the spectators saw that the ball had found the net and that there was not the slightest possibility of offside or anything else being alleged against it. Some very hearty handshaking was indulged in by the players, and Durrant must have felt himself a very happy man. The Rangers made plucky attempts to get on equal terms during the few minutes that remained, but all to no purpose, and there was nothing to interfere with the ovation given to the Luton players as they left the field.

That Luton thoroughly merited their victory there can be no doubt, and I think I shall be equally near the mark in saying that they are not likely to meet many more powerful teams this season. Nevertheless, I was a little disappointed with the form shown by the home-eters in the first half. On the part of some of the defenders—not the backs—there was a trifle too much hesitation in tackling, and on the part of some of the forwards there was too much hesitation in making openings or in taking advantage of them when they came.

Storey was the worst offender in the front string. Possibly he was not feeling up to the mark, but however that may be, he was sadly deficient in dash. Eaton also was not at his best, but he improved wonderfully in the second half. Allsopp played a very fair game, but the best men were McKee and Durrant, the former of whom worked most untiringly, whilst Durrant seemed in the mood to make the best of anything that came his way.

White and Fred Hawkes both performed fairly well at half-back, the former perhaps doing the larger share of work, and Williams rendered a pretty good account of himself, but has played better. He lost ground many times through hesitation, and was unfortunate in having the cleverest forward to deal with. Bennett played a great game at back, tackling and kicking with much smartness and judgment, and McEwen, considering that he was not in the best of condition, played marvellously. His enthusiasm is simply boundless, and the way in which he got through his work deserved all the appreciation shown by the crowd. Thompson gave a very fine exhibition between the sticks, and there was never a moment in which he caused the slightest anxiety.

The visitors, also, had no reason to find fault with their custodians, who fully maintained his reputation. Archer was the better of two good backs, and the halves were a very strong trio.

whilst Hamilton was the most conspicuous man in a pretty smart forward line. Luton will have all their work cut out when they meet the Rangers in the Cup-ties—that is, supposing that pleasure should be vouchsafed to them.

It looks quite like the old times to see Luton and Millwall at the head of the League, each being credited with seven points. Luton take premier place by reason of being a shade better on the goal average. There were two surprises in Saturday's matches, one being Wellingborough's one-to-nil victory at Brentford, and the other Brighton's startling performance at Portsmouth, where the homesters were beaten by three goals to nil. The following is the League table up to date:—

|                         | Goals |     |     |     |      |       |    |
|-------------------------|-------|-----|-----|-----|------|-------|----|
|                         | Plyd. | Wn. | Lt. | Dn. | For. | Agst. | P. |
| Luton Town .....        | 5     | 2   | 0   | 3   | 5    | 3     | 7  |
| Millwall .....          | 5     | 3   | 1   | 1   | 10   | 7     | 7  |
| Plymouth Argyll .....   | 4     | 3   | 1   | 0   | 6    | 1     | 6  |
| Wellingborough .....    | 4     | 3   | 1   | 0   | 9    | 4     | 6  |
| Reading .....           | 4     | 2   | 0   | 2   | 7    | 4     | 6  |
| Southampton .....       | 5     | 2   | 1   | 2   | 10   | 5     | 6  |
| West Ham United .....   | 6     | 2   | 2   | 2   | 8    | 8     | 6  |
| Brentford .....         | 6     | 2   | 2   | 2   | 4    | 4     | 6  |
| Kettering .....         | 5     | 2   | 2   | 1   | 5    | 8     | 5  |
| Queen's Park Rangers... | 4     | 2   | 2   | 0   | 8    | 2     | 4  |
| Fulham .....            | 4     | 1   | 1   | 2   | 1    | 1     | 4  |
| Portsmouth .....        | 4     | 2   | 2   | 0   | 6    | 7     | 4  |
| Swindon Town .....      | 5     | 1   | 2   | 2   | 4    | 5     | 4  |
| Brighton and Hove ..... | 4     | 1   | 2   | 1   | 6    | 6     | 3  |
| Bristol Rovers .....    | 4     | 1   | 2   | 1   | 6    | 7     | 3  |
| Northampton .....       | 4     | 1   | 3   | 0   | 8    | 10    | 2  |
| Tottenham Hotspur ..... | 5     | 0   | 3   | 2   | 0    | 5     | 2  |
| New Brompton .....      | 4     | 0   | 3   | 1   | 1    | 7     | 1  |

There is little need now to say anything of last Thursday's match at West Ham. It was a poor game, and Luton were placed at a disadvantage by reason of losing Bob Hawkes' services soon after the interval, that clever player getting a bad shaking up. McEwen did not take part, but Williams performed very well in his stead. The result was a draw, nothing being scored.

The gate on Saturday was £111. The second Southern League match at home last season was with Kettering, and there were not more than a couple of thousand spectators. It is interesting to note that while Luton have this year got seven points for five matches, placing them at the head of the League, last season they were bottom but one, with three points for the five games. The improvement is all the more noteworthy when we come to look at the matches played. The first five games last season were with Portsmouth and Swindon away, and New Brompton, Kettering, and Millwall at home. This season the engagements have been with Southampton, Millwall, and West Ham away, and Fulham and Queen's Park Rangers at home.

In connection with the Goose Fair and the football match, Notts County v. Wolverhampton Wanderers, the G.N.R. will run a day excursion to Nottingham on Saturday, leaving Luton at 7.15 a.m., arriving at Nottingham 10.35 a.m., and returning at 9.55 p.m.

On Saturday next, the Luton team will have another stiff task on hand, having to play Plymouth Argyle, at Plymouth. They will leave Luton on Friday by the 12.30 train for London. The team will be the same as against Queen's Park Rangers, except that Bob Hawkes will take his usual place. White, who has not been in the best of health lately, made the journey to Plymouth on Wednesday, and is fully expected to turn out. McEwen is also going on well, and may be regarded as a practical certainty. White's indisposition is not at all of a serious character; he is merely "run down." Williams and Holdstock, however, will make the trip in case of emergency.

The Luton directors are in negotiation with another forward, and it is possible that we may hear of his having signed on before the week is out.