

Football Notes and News.

By "Grasshopper."

SOUTHERN LEAGUE.

LUTON'S VICTORY OVER READING.

Hats off, please, to Luton Town! By their victory over Reading on Saturday on the Bury Park enclosure, Luton have gone to the top of the Southern League. They have also the further distinction of being the only team in that League with an unbeaten record this season. It may be too early yet to crow. I don't crow—I only mention it as a fact, and pass on. The Luton lads are now more popular than ever, and although a 5,000 gate is a good one for a home match, I shall be greatly surprised if there is not even a much larger attendance at subsequent matches.

There were one or two points of interest attached to Saturday's match. Although the homesters were the favourites, speculation on their triumph was not confident. In the first place, Reading shared the honour of being the other team in the League that had not yet been defeated. Last season's match at Luton went against the homesters by 3 goals to love, and one had to remember that since that time both teams have improved to a certain extent. Then, again, the "Strawplaiters" were weakened by the continued and enforced absence of their plucky little Captain and powerful back—McEwen—who, it is said, will go into hospital this week owing to an internal complaint.

It is also said that McEwen will not play again this season, but let us hope for the best, and trust that before long he will be in his place in the team. Luton managed to do without him on Saturday, but I fancy they would have done considerably better with him, even if he had only given our men more confidence.

One should not expect too much of Harry Williams, and it is true he made one or two mistakes in the first half, but nothing came of his little errors, and I was pleased to see him play a much better game after changing ends.

The teams were:—

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

Reading: Naisby; H. Smith and Clinch; Henderson, Good and Willis; Simpson, Poppitt, Bevan, Heywood, and Flynn.

Mr. A. Milward (Leyton), officiated as referee, and the linesmen were Mr. Blythe and Mr. Peirce, of London.

Thompson once more won the spin, and Reading, having Hobson's choice, prepared to defend the railway goal.

As a game, and taken all through, I did not think a great deal of it, but this was due to the tactics employed rather than to any bad play on the part of either side. In the first place, the pace was a killing one, and was bound to tell its tale long before the game ceased. The fact is, Luton won by their old methods. Our men set the pace; for the first quarter of an hour they went at it for all they were worth. The Reading men were simply nonplussed, and before long showed signs of exhaustion.

But so did Luton—not, however, before they had notched two points, and made themselves masters of the situation. Although perhaps the visitors had the best of the opening exchanges, Luton took up the aggressive in right earnest. Both wings worked energetically, and in less than five minutes McKee scored a brilliant goal, giving Naisby no possible chance.

Goal No. 2 was added by Eaton, though it is quite true there was just a little bit of luck attached to it. It happened in this wise. Durrant outplayed Willis and Clinch, and safely took the leather almost half the distance of the field, and sent in a terrific shot. The Reading custodian, however, saved that in the nick of time; but in fisting out, the ball came in contact with Eaton's head—or Eaton's head came in contact with the ball, which, it was not quite clear—but at any rate the inside right quickly headed into the net.

Play in the remainder of the first half was of a somewhat spasmodic character, but at no time did Reading appear to be dangerous, and Thompson was only once severely tested. The visitors' left wing were just getting away when the whistle went for half-time.

The second moiety was productive of several fouls and a number of corners. Two or three times the leather was headed over the bar by the Luton men. Allsopp gave Naisby a stinger to negotiate, and once or twice afterwards the Reading custodian had the greatest difficulty in preventing Luton from getting through again. After about thirty minutes of tame play, Reading suddenly assumed the aggressive. All along it had been felt that no more goals would be registered. This, however, was not to be so, and less than two minutes from time, Reading scored from a scramble in front of the railway goal.

Thompson was completely beaten at close quarters, though he had saved many shots that seemed much more difficult. The visitors again tried to rush the game, but it was of no avail, and play finished with the result—

Luton	2 goals,
Reading	1 goal.

Though I liked Reading's play, yet I had expected much more of them. Their inferiority to Luton was apparent to all, and certainly Naisby was one of their strong points. Smith and Clinch were generally safe. Flynn and Heywood played a decent game, but Simpson, who was being continually fed, did no great performance. Good was, perhaps, the best of the trio.

As for Luton, if they did nothing wonderful in the second half, they certainly tried to do their utmost. Bennett played a good game, and the halves were in evidence all the time. The forwards were guilty of a number of mistakes, but McKee did not have the best of luck. Without a doubt Durrant was by far the best forward on the field, and distinguished himself with good play and sound judgment. Sammy Eaton played a much better game than I have seen him play for the last few weeks. He is improving wonderfully, and I guess the "Tin Hatters" would like to have him back now. Storey, about whom there has been a little disappointment of late, gave a decent exhibition of the game, and was always willing to try. Allsopp, too, worked hard.