

Football.

LUTON v. BRISTOL ROVERS.

Played at Luton on Saturday. Result:—

Luton	1 goal
Bristol Rovers	nil

The teams were as follow:—

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

Bristol Rovers—Cartlidge; Dunn and Pudan; Tat, Appieby, and Gray; Wilson, Elmore, Beats, Smith, and Marriott.

Referee, Mr. F. Crabtree (Ealing).

The visit of the Bristol Rovers attracted a crowd of five or six thousand persons, the gate realising £118, and though this showed a slight falling off as compared with the Reading game, the directors still had every reason to feel gratified with the amount of support accorded them. Two or three years ago, when the Rovers visited Luton to play a Cup-tie, the gate fell short of £90, and that, too, after the home Club had resisted a very tempting offer to go to Bristol.

But after a long chapter of disasters and discouragements, matters are now looking up, and, as often happens, when things are going well, circumstances generally seem to be favourable. I remember that in some dry seasons we have had a succession of wet Saturdays for home matches, and now, in a soaking wet season, every Saturday upon which there has been a Southern League match at home the weather has been almost as good as could have been wished.

On this occasion Luton were fortunate in something more than the weather. They were fortunate in winning a match in which their superiority was not very pronounced, and they were still more fortunate in winning it by a goal which was open to a considerable amount of doubt. This, however, atones somewhat for the hard lines experienced at the hands of referees in one or two previous encounters.

Much satisfaction was expressed at McEwen's ability to turn out again, and the skipper came in for a rousing cheer as he led his men on to the field. The game commenced five minutes before time, and it was as well it did, for the light was none too good at the finish.

The Rovers had the advantage of playing the first half with a strong wind behind them, and they very soon gave evidence of a strong determination to be the first, if it was in any way possible, to lower Luton's colours. They are a fine, dashing lot of fellows, and their smartness elicited admiration even while it caused concern.

After a fruitless attack by Luton, the Rovers got away, and a centre from the left wing looked dangerous, more especially as Bob Hawkes, who got on the ball, was very slow in clearing. Then Luton got up the field again, and White put in a very good shot, which Cartlidge saved. Durrant afterwards receiving a pass from Fred Hawkes, sailed away in that irresistible style of his, and finished up with a grand centre, but the visitors cleared.

The Rovers' defence was indeed wonderfully smart, and time and again they pounced on the ball and got it away while the homesters were thinking what they should do with it. Of course, the strong wind helped them a lot, but still several of the home team did seem unusually slow, and there is no doubt that the visitors were unusually fast—the fastest, I should think, that we have had on the ground this season.

Presently, Wilson obtained a corner as the result of a faulty pass back by Allsopp, and the outside-right placed beautifully, but Thompson punted away in fine style, and when Wilson tried with another kick, the ball went behind. A little later Beats got a clear opening and sent in a grounder, and once again Thompson came out of the ordeal with flying colours, throwing himself full length and saving just against the post. Still the Rovers pressed, and were rewarded with a couple of corners, from the second of which Thompson again brought off a good save.

In response to the exhortations of the crowd, Luton woke up and transferred the play to the other end, where a middle by Durrant gave Storey a glorious opportunity, but the centre-forward put in a tame shot, and Durrant, rushing in, drove it into the net. There was no question, however, as to Durrant having been offside, and the goal was very properly disallowed.

Durrant just now was showing up in brilliant form, and it was rather a pity that he was not given a little more work. One shot of his went just over the bar, and then again he made a fine run and put the ball right across the mouth of goal. The custodian made an ineffective attempt to clear, and while he was on the ground Turner had an open goal, but unaccountably shot over the bar. He whipped himself for missing, and well he might, for he will never have a better chance as long as he lives.

Nothing further of note happened before the interval, except a couple of splendid clearances by Thompson, and the teams crossed over with a blank score sheet. Some time before this, McEwen had got Storey and Turner to change places, with a view to brightening up the attack, and Turner continued to play centre-forward throughout the second half, but there was no perceptible difference in the play.

The most exciting incident of the first few minutes after change of ends was a startling run by Gray, who threaded his way right through the Luton defence and then shot wide. Then Luton retaliated, and Durrant, Eaton, and Allsopp all made very promising attempts. After this, we had a comic interlude in the way of a dog hunt, the referee stopping the game while a collie and a terrier were chased off the field. The collie went quickly enough, but the terrier, after proving impervious to Mr. Crabtree's blandishments, dodged about with amusing perverseness when a more threatening attitude was adopted.

The game was at length resumed, and after a brief incursion by the Rovers, Storey made a good opening, but prolonged his dribble unduly, and was finally held off the ball while the goalkeeper cleared. Cartlidge next fisted out from a headed by Turner, did ditto a moment later to a shot from Fred Hawkes, and then Bob Hawkes found himself with a good chance, but lifted the ball over the bar.

Luton continued on the aggressive, and eventually Storey and Turner were observed to be clear with the ball, and Turner taking possession ran down and scored. Personally, I think Turner and Storey were both offside when the ball came to them, unless it touched one of the Rovers in its passage, but the referee seemed to have no doubt about the matter and the visitors made no appeal.

Anyhow, the goal counted, it was the winning goal, and the spectators cheered enthusiastically. Luton attacked vigorously after this, and whereas the Rovers only became dangerous once, when McEwen headed towards Thompson instead of in the other direction, the Bristol citadel had several narrow escapes. Once Storey shot just by the upright, another time Pudam nearly put through his own goal, again Turner shot tamely when he had only the goalkeeper to beat, and lastly Allsopp failed by inches with a shot which passed just by the opposite post.

Altogether, the game was a jolly good one, in which there was very little to choose between the two teams. We missed McKee somewhat, for on the day and against such a team as the Rovers he was just the man that was wanted. Turner performed very well, and so did Storey, though he was a bit slow and did not use the best of judgment in keeping onside. Allsopp

played well on the left wing, and Eaton worked with great perseverance, but Durrant was undoubtedly the bright, particular star in the front line. There is one very strong point about the Luton forwards, and that is that they do keep together well. When they go for goal they generally go in a line, and it is this sweeping movement which makes them dangerous. Although on Saturday the Rovers had a very fair share of the game, they were seldom so threatening as the Luton men were.

In the half-back line, Fred Hawkes stood out conspicuously, doing a lot of very fine work, but White was not quite up to the mark, and Bob Hawkes, for a wonder, was a good deal below it. McEwen did much better than we could have expected at back, and will soon be in his old form, and Bennett played a capital game. Thompson was as smart and reliable as ever, and never gave a moment's anxiety.

Cartlidge also kept a good goal for the visitors, and Dunn was the more noticeable of a capable pair of backs. Wilson, the outside-right, was the more prominent of the Rovers' front string, but the best man of all was Gray, the left-half, who was in brilliant form, his bright and dashing play being one of the features of the game.

The great surprise of Saturday's Southern League games was the defeat of Southampton on their own ground by Plymouth Argyle by five goals to three. On Monday, Reading went to Wellingborough and won by 2 goals to 1, the couple of points thus captured taking them to the topmost position. The following is the League table up to date:—

	Plyd.	Wn.	Lt.	Dn.	Goals		P.
					For.	Agst.	
Reading	9	5	1	8	17	10	13
Luton Town	8	4	0	4	8	4	12
Plymouth Argyle.....	9	5	2	2	16	8	12
Bristol Rovers	9	5	3	1	19	9	11
Southampton.....	9	4	2	3	20	13	11
Millwall	9	5	3	1	22	13	11
Portsmouth	7	5	2	0	13	8	10
Brentford	10	4	4	2	11	13	10
Fulham	8	2	1	5	9	7	9
Wellingborough	7	3	3	1	10	7	7
Queen's Park Rangers...	8	3	4	1	9	9	7
Kettering	9	3	5	1	10	27	7
West Ham United	8	2	4	2	11	15	6
Brighton and Hove	8	2	4	2	11	15	6
Tottenham Hotspur.....	9	1	4	4	5	10	6
Swindon Town	9	1	4	4	6	13	6
Northampton.....	8	2	5	1	9	18	5
New Brompton	8	0	5	3	1	13	3

"Rover." of the "Morning Leader," says: "Really, little Luton, you astonish us! Last season the Bedford men did nothing to make us regard them as one of the swells of the League, and the team has changed so little since then that we cannot account for their success. That they deserve all they have achieved goes without saying, and no one would be more delighted than myself to see them resume their old place at, or near, the top of Southern clubs, for it must be remembered that Luton was a first-class club before most of our present-day cracks were out of their swaddling clothes. Was it ten or twelve years ago that Millwall and Luton were out by

themselves at the top of the tree? It would not at all be a bad thing for the game to see those two clubs again competing for supremacy in the Southern League, but I fancy Argyle and Southampton—yes, even Southampton—may have something to say in the matter."

Fewer goals have been scored against Luton than against any other Club in the Southern League. And strange to say, there are only three Clubs that have scored fewer goals. Evidently, it is the defence that has placed Luton in their present proud position. Now, then, forwards, buck up!

With regard to the visit of Hitchin Town to Luton next Saturday, it is due to the Herts Club to say that the result of their South-Eastern League match with Watford last week by no means represents their real strength. Three men—Jeakings, Smith, and Pearce—were to have been met at St. Albans, to go on with the rest by brake, but by some means they missed the others, and Hitchin arrived with eight men. The linesman was put in, and made a ninth—of a sort. As if things were not bad enough already, Barker, the centre-forward, had the misfortune to be hurt, and was off the field for a considerable time. Hitchin did not resort to the one-back game, but played three forwards (reduced to two while Barker was off), and with a greatly weakened defence, did no worse than was to be expected in losing 9—0. Watford (who were still without Lindsay) tried hard to make the score 10, in view of their S.E.L. average, but just failed. In addition to the three men named, Hitchin were short of Barnes and Albon, two of their regular defence.

For the Cup-tie on Saturday, Luton, leaving nothing to chance, will put their strongest available eleven in the field. This, however, will not include McKee, who is not making as good progress as could be wished. To get Hitchin over here, the directors have had to guarantee them £25.

The Hitchin eleven on Saturday will probably be:—Cooper; Barnes and Allen; Stimpson, Albon, and Smith; Pearce, Cannon, Barker, Payne, and Taylor. Allen, Smith, and Pearce were with Bedford Queen's last season; and Barker is the former Luton centre. Barnes is an uncertain starter, and may be replaced by Jeakings.

A writer in a Reading paper breaks into verse on the subject of Reading's recent visit to Luton. There is rhyme and perhaps some reason in his efforts, but the poetry is open to improvement. Here are a couple of verses:—

"There is a little Straw
Who lives down Luton way,
He in the Southern League
Up to now has held the sway.
The Biscuit went to Luton
The Straw-plaiter to attack;
The Straw fell on the Biscuit,
And broke the Biscuit's back.
But the Biscuit still is smiling,
There are other days in store;
When that Straw comes to Reading
He'll be made to feel quite sore.
The Biscuit he'll sit quiet and wait
For the day that has to come,
And when he meets that Straw again
I'll bet he'll make things hum."