

Football.

The Southern League.

LUTON v. NEW BROMPTON.

Played at New Brompton on Saturday
Result: --

Luton.....	2 goals.
New Brompton	2 goals.

The teams were as follow:—

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

New Brompton—Mertherill; McCurdy and White; Lloyd, Goldie, and Elliot; Bradbury, Robertson, Stevenson, Lissenden, and Singleton.

Referee, Mr. F. S. Walford (Ponder's End).

Judging from the positions of the two Clubs on the League table, Saturday's match looked an easy "snip" for the only unbeaten side in the competition. But when the New Brompton home performances are examined it will be observed they have only suffered defeat on their own pitch from Southampton. Indeed, I was informed on arrival at the ground, they had never been beaten on the play in any match at home so far this season, their lowly position notwithstanding. I know the Luton players recognised they would have no easy task, seeing once before, in a South-Eastern League match, the Kentish side had come out on top, and this after being a goal behind.

It was something of a novelty to be playing a Southern League fixture away from Dunstable-road, for the journey to Kent was the first under these auspices since the first Saturday of October, when the long jaunt to Plymouth was undertaken. Thus eleven weeks have passed into history since the Lutonians had challenged a team on foreign soil for Southern League points. As Durrant was scarcely sound, and in addition was suffering from a bad cold, it was deemed advisable to play the same team which had carried our colours in the most recent League engagements, Eaton retaining the outside position on the right wing, with Storey as his partner.

New Brompton made several compulsory changes, chiefly the result of the strenuous Football Association Cup tie encounters with Bristol City. Clutterbuck, Raisbeck, and Boucher being the principal absentees. Our old friend, Davidson, was not brought in, and I understand he is on the transfer list. I wonder where next he will be given a chance, for he has probably worn the colours of more Southern League clubs than any other player, and will doubtless have some slight difficulty in getting fixed up again as a consequence.

The crowd were rather slow in turning up, and when the teams came out there was quite a number of vacant spaces round the ropes. Still by the time the players had got away there were some 3,000 spectators present. This, I suppose, must be reckoned fairly satisfactory, considering the early start and disappointing results attending the efforts of the home team. McEwen won the toss, and naturally took advantage of a fairish wind. The first movement, however, was in favour of New Brompton, Bradbury getting well up with the ball, but Bob Hawkes nipped in and spoilt a very promising opening by neatly robbing the ex-Bristol right winger.

The Luton attack now made their presence felt, and after some good work put in by this division, McKee was observed making tracks towards the New Brompton goal. But the referee had a little to say in stopping this well-meant effort, and pulled Mac up for offside, to the great surprise of friend and foe alike. Mr. Walford must have overlooked the fact of both backs being in position in addition to the goalkeeper, and the Bromptonians openly chuckled at their good fortune.

Whenever Luton visit the dockyard neighbourhood, they get a small crowd of supporters in the corner near their dressing-room, who usually do their level best to cheer on the visitors. The game was scarcely five minutes old before this little knot of ex-Lutonians had a chance to give vent to their feelings. McKee forced his way through in his well-known style and passed the ball right across to the left wing. Bob Hawkes made a fine dash through, and meeting the leather he worked himself into a good position before he let drive with a shot which beat the goalkeeper all the way, and Luton stood a goal up.

For some minutes after this it appeared that the home team would go to pieces, and if the Luton forwards had only been able to press home the advantage obtained in midfield, it would probably have meant full points coming Bedfordshire way. On one occasion White tried a long shot on his own, which nearly came off, but Eaton spoilt the opening by getting offside. Just after, the referee pulley McKee up for a foul on Goldie near the New Brompton uprights, and thus another opportunity was thrown away. Still, although at this point the work of the Luton forwards was pretty to watch, it did not bring goals, and the play gradually veered round, and the home attack had a greater share in the exchanges.

Singleton made the running on the left wing, causing Bennett to kick out, the crowd jeering meanwhile. But Jack could not do better for his side, and, I presume, felt justified in his action, for he did it very deliberately. Immediately after this, McKee almost brought about an equaliser by passing the ball the wrong way, and towards his own goal, but the home team did not take advantage, probably not expecting help from this quarter. A little later the Luton centre made amends by forcing the play at the opposite end, and Eaton worked himself into a very dangerous position, but White (New Brompton) got in his way, and gave a corner, which was easily got away.

Bradbury was fouled by McEwen, and McCurdy placed the resulting free kick a la Orr at Fulham, but Singleton was not able to turn it to the same advantage, and the danger passed away. Strong appeals were made for a penalty when Stevenson fell within the fatal area, but the referee was deaf to the entreaties of the New Brompton crowd, and the incident passed off.

It was now the turn of our left wing, and Allsopp, getting the better of the argument with McCurdy, caused Metherill to come out in order to save from Turner. Coming again, Turner put the ball across finely to Eaton, but the latter was offside, and a nice movement was thus thrown away. Allsopp also tried one on his own, which Metherill just turned round the post.

From a breakaway at the opposite end, Singleton had a good chance, for Thompson fell in making the save, but although he lost the ball for the moment, he succeeded in reaching it and throwing it away before the home forwards could take advantage of the slip. Thompson, after this, saved a couple of long attempts in good style, Luton being awarded a free kick on the last occasion because Stevenson fouled the Luton goalie after he had got rid of the ball.

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The home side were doing better at this stage than at any time previously, and had rather hard lines when Stevenson struck the cross-bar with a shot which Thompson made little effort to get at. Several of the Luton forwards were limping towards the interval, the result of encounters with White, who is a big fellow, and not at all the chap one would desire to meet in a charge at close quarters. Still, one other chance to increase the score came to McKee, who was left in good position, and he let drive with all his might. I am convinced Metherrill had no idea where the ball was until it struck him, and the home side were extremely lucky not to have a second goal registered against them at the interval, for the referee called the players off immediately after this incident with the score 1-0 in favour of Luton.

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Re-starting, Luton appeared likely to settle matters straight away, Allsopp getting the upper hand of McCurdy after a fine sprint, but could not make an opening, and the old Lutonian was able to get the ball away at a second attempt. Just after, White tried a long shot, but the direction was at fault. It was now the turn of the right wing, and Eaton put across nicely to McKee, who was well up, but our centre-forward had hard luck with his shot, the ball just missing the goal, and passed over the line by the post.

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At the opposite end Singleton made bad use of a good chance by dropping the ball too far back, and White relieved the pressure. On the other wing, Bradbury put in a hot one, which Thompson did well to get away. It was by this time apparent that the home players were finding their feet, and with the wind in their favour would want some stopping if Luton were to maintain their unbeaten certificate.

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A fine individual piece of work on the part of Bob Hawkes almost resulted in a second goal, but Bob just failed to steer the ball between the sticks. He was deservedly cheered by the crowd, and it was distinctly hard lines, for he was fouled no fewer than four times in forcing his way through the New Brompton lines, the referee duly noting the infringements, but allowing the game to proceed, as Bob cleverly surmounted the difficulty each time. This incident was really the last time Luton were really dangerous, with the exception of a breakaway, when Euton notched the second goal.

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Play was chiefly in the Luton half, and McEwen was compelled to concede a corner with Bradbury in possession, after a centre from the opposite wing. This was well placed, but Goldie headed over, and the pressure was temporarily relieved. After this, corners in favour of New Brompton were far too numerous to be pleasant to Lutonians, and it must be conceded it was a slice of luck when from one of these kicks Eaton got away while one of the linesmen and half the New Brompton team were appealing because the ball had gone over the line. Metherill saved at the first attempt, but could not hold the ball, and it was found safely in the net.

This happened after twenty minutes' play in the second half, and it looked good business for a win, especially when the defensive record of our side was taken into consideration. But the play was soon at the opposite end once more, and from another corner kick the ball was bobbing about in front of Thompson for some time. At last the referee blew his whistle, and pointed to the centre, giving a goal to New Brompton. Whether this was a correct ruling or no could not be judged from the Press box, but Thompson declared after the match that the ball never passed over the line, either in the air or on the ground.

The crowd woke up at this good fortune, and gave the home players every encouragement. White (New Brompton) was brought into the attack in order to force the game, McCurdy being left in sole charge at full back. The pressure was well sustained, and the move had the justification of success, for the full back had the satisfaction of driving home the equaliser amid loud cheers. From this point to the end there was only one team in it, and that was not Luton. Indeed, for the first time this season, they were lucky in getting away with a division of the spoils. Still they were undefeated, and this is a big thing, seeing Preston North End, the only other undefeated side in the principal Leagues, went down to Barnsley. Thus Luton are left alone in their glory.

When Eaton secured the second goal, I quite thought full points would come to Luton, but on the day's play I must admit New Brompton fully deserved all they got. Their goalkeeper was making his initial appearance in the Southern League, but was not found a deal of work, McCurdy and White having the Luton forwards well in hand, and thus keeping the ball away from the vicinity of the home uprights as much as possible. The last-named was none too gentle in his methods, and the Luton right wing bore marks of his attentions long before the interval.

Goldie was probably the most effective member of the middle line, while considering the changes forward, the attacking brigade must be awarded praise, with Stevenson the most dangerous.

For Luton, Thompson, as usual, played well, and was in no way blameworthy with either goal. At full back, probably Bennett got through the most effective work, but McEwen was always in evidence when required. Among the halves Bob Hawkes took the eye of the crowd, but White was probably equally as good, although in a different style. Allsopp and Turner furnished the better pair forward, but undoubtedly they were greatly assisted by Bob Hawkes, who several times was equal to a third member of this wing, and was a great factor in forcing the game on his side. Eaton also did wonderfully well in Durrant's position, until brought further behind in the closing stages to assist the defence while New Brompton were pressing.

Durrant will almost certainly turn out Christmas Day v. Clapton Orient, and should his leg stand, will take his usual place with Eaton as his partner during the holiday matches. Personally, this is the team I should like to see for the friendly: Thompson; Bennett and McEwen; F. Hawkes, Holdstock, and White; Durrant, R. Hawkes, McKee, Turner or Storey, and Eaton. What say you?