

The Southern League.

BRENTFORD v. LUTON.

Played at Brentford on Saturday. Result:—

Brentford		2 goals.
Luton		1 goal.

The following players turned out:—

Luton—Thompson; Dow and McEwen; F. Hawkes, White, and Williams; Eaton, R. Hawkes, Moody, Turner, and Allsopp.

Brentford—Spicer; Watson and Davidson; Cae, Parsonage, and Bellingham; Bell, Brett, Barron, Buchanan, and Underwood.

Referee, Mr. F. S. Walford (Pondor's Road); Linesmen, Messrs. J. Griffiths and A. Mouncher (London).

Previous to Saturday, Luton had always managed to earn winning brackets at Brentford, but their ill-success away from home since the new year still dogged their footsteps, and another defeat was the result of the journey in search of Southern League points. Two alterations were made from the team that went down to Queen's Park Rangers, but on the whole it was judged the team was at least as strong as Thursday's side.

Bennett's cold prevented him turning out, and thus he was absent from his first Southern League engagement this season. Dow therefore wore Luton's colours for the first time in that competition. Probably the change from which most was expected was the inclusion of Bob Hawkes among the attacking brigade, and, as will be noted, he so far justified these hopes by netting the only goal for his side.

Since the beginning of February the B's, as they are generally dubbed, have not suffered defeat, and I must admit they are a vastly different side from that which visited Luton some four months ago. It appears a remark by a local correspondent in the London Press to the effect "Brentford were the worst team which had visited Luton," has rankled in the breasts of their supporters, and I heard it repeated several times during the progress of the game, while after the match the spectators who spotted a Lutonian were jubilant in quoting the reference, and wished to know what sort of team Luton must be, seeing they were beaten by the worst team in the League.

McEwen lost the toss, but there was not a deal in it, and for several minutes nothing of a particularly striking character resulted. The first really dangerous opening came from a neat pass along the ground by Bob Hawkes to Eaton, who promptly slung the ball across the goal-mouth, but Turner headed behind, and nothing more than a goal-kick resulted. At the opposite end Buchanan managed to elude Dow, but White nipped in, although he was obliged to concede a corner, which was splendidly placed, but Thompson got the ball away in brilliant style.

For a time the "Bees" had by far the better of the exchanges, and the Luton defence was kept on the alert. Following a spell of strong pressure, Williams stopped a good attempt from the home right wing, and the crowd set up a loud appeal for a penalty, on the supposition that the Luton player handled, but the referee took not the slightest notice and the game went on. A few minutes later Thompson tipped a long shot from Parsonage over the bar when it looked almost a certain goal, and the resulting corner was easily got away.

Again, another long attempt from the home half-back line almost opened the score, Thompson scarcely gathering a shot by Bellingham, but after dropping the ball he got it away at a second attempt. The Brentford players set up an appeal that the ball had been over, but Mr. Walford was deaf to their entreaties, fortunately for Luton. From a centre by Bell the ball was put through by Buchanan, but the latter was so palpably offside the crowd made only a subdued appeal for a goal.

From hands against Dow the ball was put wide of the post, and play afterwards veered round more in Luton's favour. Bob Hawkes worked the ball through in good style, but his final kick had little powder behind it, and Spicer had no difficulty in saving his charge. Following a spell of right wing attack, Eaton was getting away nicely, but Bellingham literally pushed him off the ball as he was about to shoot. Allsopp put in a fine run on the opposite wing, and Moody meeting his centre, caused Spicer to bring off a good save. This effort was by far the most dangerous attempt from Luton during the initial half-hour.

As half-time approached Brentford once more assumed the upper hand and gave Thompson an anxious time, Barron especially putting in a fine shot which Thompson saved by giving a corner. A foul against Williams some thirty yards out looked dangerous, but the ball was put well over. Four minutes from the interval the efforts of Brentford were rewarded by a goal. The real credit for this must be given to Buchanan, who started the movement and tricked several opponents, but he parted with the ball a few yards out of goal, and Bell rushing up, easily placed by Thompson, who came out to meet him, but was not in time to prevent a shot.

This success naturally put the local spectators on good terms with themselves, but they received a terrible shock just as they were prepared to cheer their pets as they came off for refreshments. The play was forced towards the Bees' goal, and when it appeared the ball was travelling harmlessly over the line Eaton stopped it, and using fine judgment in not trying a shot on his own, put the ball in the centre, and Bob Hawkes, who was standing well up, had simply to turn the sphere into the net, and thus Luton were able to cross over on equal terms. On the play Luton scarcely deserved to equalise, but it was a good goal nevertheless.

Soon after the re-start Thompson's charge had a very narrow escape from a shot from Brett. Although the Brentford player was well offside, the presiding official judged otherwise, and undoubtedly if the ball had passed between the uprights a goal would have counted. Rain now began to fall, but it made little difference to the play, for the pitch was fairly firm, although exceedingly bumpy, thereby causing the ball to play unexpected pranks at times. Mr. Walford was not in his usual form, and he made several mistakes on offside, Moody, on one occasion, being wrongly pulled up when in a good position.

The exchanges were fairly even for a considerable time without being exciting, but twenty

minutes after the interval what proved the winning goal for Brentford was netted, although there was a decided element of luck about it. Bell, who was almost on the goal-line some six or ten yards wide of the post, put across what he evidently meant for a centre, as it was practically impossible to shoot a goal from such a position. But Thompson, in jumping up to reach the ball, rather misjudged it, and apparently turned it into the net, greatly to the surprise of everybody and the evident delight of the crowd, who now saw visions of a couple of points accruing.

The Lutonians present had their hopes raised by a piece of good work put in by Turner. This player passed the ball across to Bob Hawkes, who engineered a fine opening a few yards wide of the goal. It was one of those opportunities which Bob delights in, but on this occasion he got too far under the leather, and it passed high over. Following this, Underwood came away in great style, and after bringing the ball three-quarters the length of the field, he sent in a terrific shot which just missed the upright. This was by far the most brilliant effort of the day and fully deserved to score.

With time rapidly approaching, both sides tired, for although the game was by no means a great one, it had been rather exacting, as each team were triers all the way, and it was no "go as you please." Some amusement was caused by a most open handling by Dow, who could not quite reach the ball in any other way, and deliberately patted it into touch just out of the reach of Underwood. Moody was given a chance from a pass by Bob Hawkes, but he was suspiciously like offside, and probably this influenced his final attempt, although the referee failed to pull him up.

Thus the game finished with Brentford the winners by 2 goals to 1. I must admit they were fully entitled to their first success against Luton, for they enjoyed quite two-thirds of the pressure. Still, if Luton had been in their early season form, there is little doubt a very different result would have been recorded. With the possible exception of Bennett, I do not think the side that represented Luton at Brentford could be greatly improved at the present time. I do not wish to infer that Dow was a weak spot on Saturday, for he was not. He took his part in the defence, never hesitating to tackle, while his judgment in kicking was all that could be desired. Still, it stands to reason a better understanding must result between McEwen and Bennett, if only because they have been associated as companions in defence for seven months, while "Johnny" has only played with Mac on a single occasion previously.

This also naturally affected Thompson, who has given better displays during the current season. Although he brought off more than one brilliant save, he did not appear quite so much at home as usual. At half-back some good work was put in by each member of this division, and if White is put down as the most prominent it is only because from his position on the field he is called upon more often than his wing comrades.

So far as the attacking department was concerned the inclusion of Bob Hawkes, in my opinion, improved the line, and with a few games he should develop into a fine forward. Still, it will always be a matter of opinion if what the team gain by bringing him into the front line they more than miss among the middle division. He threatened danger in a most unexpected manner several times, and when the other members of the line become accustomed to his style it should spell goals, and this is what is urgently needed if Luton are to take a leading position on the Southern League table.

It was scarcely to be expected combination would be a strong factor on Saturday, on account of the recent changes in the composition of the front string, but if the line as constituted at Brentford could be played regularly, it is possible an improvement in the important matter of goal-netting would result.

In the other Southern League matches West Ham were defeated at home by Tottenham Hotspur by two goals to nil, and Brighton Albion also suffered defeat on their own ground by three goals to one, Southampton being the victors. Queen's Park Rangers drew at Reading at one goal all, Millwall effected a pointless draw at Wellingborough, a similar result was arrived at at Swindon, where Plymouth were the visitors, and New Brompton drew at Northampton at two goals all. Portsmouth beat Kettering by 3 goals to 2, and Bristol Rovers accounted for Fulham by one goal to none.

On Monday Northampton drew at Fulham