

The Southern League.

LUTON v. READING.

Played at Reading on Saturday. Result:—

Reading	1 goal.
Luton	nil.

The teams were as follow:—

Luton—Lindsay; Turner and McEwen; Pritchard, White, and R. Hawkes; Lamberton, Eaton, Penman, Ross, and Barnes.

Reading—Naisby; Henderson and Smith; Riley, Bannister, and Brown; Long, Higginson, Corrin, McIntyre, and Crombie.

Referee, Mr. J. W. Bailey (Leicester).

On paper form, it was really too much to expect a win at Reading, but hopes based on previous performances in the biscuit centre buoyed up the team and officials who made the journey. It will be noticed Fred Hawkes was an absentee, a certain interesting event earlier in the week, of course, being the cause, but his standing down meant no loss of confidence by the directors, for with Pritchard available there was felt to be little cause for anxiety.

About 5,000 were present when Penman kicked off, Reading having won the toss. There was a decided breeze, of which the home side naturally took advantage. Still, it was Luton who were first dangerous, chiefly through the work of Ross and Barnes on the left. The latter taking a clever pass from Ross, centred right across to Eaton, who was standing practically alone, but Naisby somewhat easily disposed of his shot by giving a corner, which was not improved upon.

A little later Lamberton received in an almost similar position, but he put the ball wide and an opportunity was spoilt. This was not at all to the liking of the Reading spectators, who could only exercise their lungs when the home defence brought off some brilliant save. But after some ten or twelve minutes they had the satisfaction of cheering the attacking brigade, for Long got going, and once or twice Pritchard was hard put to it, but he nipped in several times to good effect. Still the Reading forwards were having a bigger share of the play, and Lindsay was called upon by Corrin, but he was on the spot, and, catching the leather, threw it down the field.

For some minutes the Reading forwards were masters of the situation until they came to Lindsay's charge, but so well did he hold the fort that really the Biscuit boys seldom looked likely to pierce his defence. On one occasion the Luton backs and halves seemed to get into a bit of a tangle, but McEwen came to the rescue in his usual daring manner, jumping in and robbing a cluster of the home forwards who were only about twelve yards away from goal.

Lindsay was called upon very similarly to Kingsley the previous week, when Pritchard, in trying to head the ball away, turned it just under the crossbar, but Luton's goalie was equal to the occasion and cleverly tipped it over. As a rule Smith was very certain in his kicking, but hereabouts he failed to get hold of the ball and it cannoned across to Penman. For a moment the local spectators held their breath, as it looked an ugly situation from a Reading point of view. The Luton centre passed over to Eaton, who was well placed, but he only put in a feeble effort which Naisby had little difficulty in clearing.

On the whole the game in the first half was a good one, although the wind oftentimes caused a stoppage because of the ball being blown into touch. A diversion was made by Lamberton, who forced his way through with the ball, and working towards the centre, his partner took the outside to wait for the pass. By drawing the defence towards him, Lamberton exhibited good judgment, and then he sent the ball out to Eaton, but the latter put the ball too far forward, and Herbert Smith was able to send down the field.

The right wing of Reading were the more dangerous pair, McEwen having a handful more than once with Higginson, who, as half-time approached, was very aggressive. Still Luton were by no means continually on the defence, and a run through by Barnes ended in Naisby having all his work cut out to dispose of the final drive from decent range by the ex-West Ham winger. McIntyre fouled Lamberton and Turner placed grandly, but Smith got his head to the ball and sent it well out of the danger zone. Just previous to retiring for refreshments, Higginson beat Turner in a race for the ball and drove it hard on the outside of the net—a very close thing indeed, and by far the nearest to scoring in this half.

Eaton made a fine pass to Lamberton quite early after changing over, and the latter got nicely away, but his centre went begging, Barnes not being able to get up in time. After this chance the scene of operations shifted to the opposite end, and Lindsay was in the midst of the play. It was only seven minutes after

the commencement of the concluding half when what proved to be only goal of the match was netted for Reading. The ball had been kept in the vicinity of the Luton goal for a moment or so, when it suddenly went out to Crombie, who was almost on the touch-line, and he caught it on the rebound. I have little doubt he only attempted to centre the ball, but it came across at a decent pace and entered the net right in the top corner. It was certainly a lucky goal; nevertheless, it meant winning honours for the home side.

Luton did not appear to take it very much to heart; indeed, Ross all but equalised, Naisby having to come out of his goal to rob the Luton inside-left. Coming through again, Crombie tried another long shot, but this time it fell a trifle short, and Corrin just failed to get up in time to rush it by Lindsay. A bit later Lindsay was compelled to run the ball out almost to the corner flag in order to relieve the pressure, and he finally kicked into touch.

A nice run through by Lamberton ended in a swinging centre which travelled over to the left wing, and Barnes put in a grand attempt, which Naisby did well to clear. Exciting items were quite frequent, for Long, taking a well-intentioned pass by Crombie, looked all over a scorer, but McEwen robbed at the moment of shooting. Crombie was assiduously fed at this stage and kept Turner busy, but the Luton back stuck well to his work, and the Reading forward could not make great headway.

Again Barnes ran through and caused Naisby to leave his goal, but the Luton player parted with the ball with splendid judgment before the Reading custodian could reach them. Unluckily for Luton, Herbert Smith just reached the centre before a Luton player could settle on it, and what appeared a certain equaliser was prevented. It was decidedly rough on Barnes, for his effort fully deserved a point.

About twenty minutes from the finish Lamberton changed places with Penman with a view to forcing a goal, but it cannot be said the change worked well, for the latter did not appear happy on the extreme wing. It was at the opposite end where the ball again entered the net, Long being the player who found the target with a really fine drive, but the referee quite rightly gave him offside. A well-worked-out movement by the majority of the Luton forwards ended by Barnes slinging across a really get with a really fine drive, but the referee quite unattended, but he made an awful mess of the opportunity by putting the ball yards over. The crowd chuckled at this let-off rather loudly. This was about the last exciting incident, and the teams left the field after an exciting if not particularly scientific display.

Luton quite kept up their reputation at Reading by giving the home side a rare tying-up to earn the points; indeed, they were full value for a draw. Lindsay once more proved a fine defender, while the backs came through with credit. At half-back Pritchard was probably the most effective, and fully deserves a regular position. Bob Hawkes, who was making his initial appearance at Reading, naturally took the eye of the crowd by many brilliant touches, albeit he had a rather dangerous couple in Long and Higginson to handle.

Undoubtedly the two who stood out among the forwards were Ross and Barnes, the latter especially bringing off numerous openings which his comrades failed to take advantage of. He was probably the best forward on the field, although Long played a fine game for Reading. Lamberton also did well at outside-right, his corners especially being finely placed. He did not have much of an opportunity when he went in the centre, as it was near time; still, I should say he was more effective on the wing.

There were two surprises in the Southern League on Saturday. One was Millwall's success at Northampton and the other Brentford's victory at Brighton. Fulham made a draw with Southampton, and Bristol Rovers, who are to be Luton's opponents on Saturday next, beat Tottenham Hotspur by 3 goals to 1.