

The Southern League.

LUTON v. BRISTOL ROVERS.

Played at Luton on Saturday. Result:—

Bristol Rovers	2 goals.
Luton	1 goal.

The teams were as follow:—

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

Bristol—Cartlidge; Dunn and Wassell; Tait, Appleby, and Jarvie; Clark, Lewis, Beats, Smith, and Dunkley.

Referee, Mr. P. R. Harrower.

The weather was beautifully fine on Saturday, and if the other circumstances had been as favourable, the four thousand spectators who assembled on the Dunstable-road ground would have enjoyed themselves immensely. Unfortunately, however, the luck seems to have deserted the Luton team, and no matter how much they may deserve to win, their efforts do not meet with success.

They were handicapped in taking the field on Saturday by the absence of Lamberton, who was on the injured list, and the experiment of playing Bob Hawkes in the forward line was not given a fair chance. The directors had decided to play Bob in the centre, with Lamberton outside-right and Eaton inside, a disposition which, I am afraid, was not the best possible, but as it was Penman reappeared at centre, Hawkes inside, and Eaton outside.

What we saw of Bob I think warranted the belief that under ordinary circumstances his inclusion would considerably strengthen the attack, but as luck would have it, he went lame after about twenty minutes' play and received little or no assistance from Penman, whose lack of anything approaching dash renders him so terribly weak in front of goal.

The game commenced a little before time in order to suit the convenience of the Rovers, and Luton were soon on the aggressive, Barnes making the running on the left. Cartlidge saved from both that player and Ross, and then, from a foul, Turner placed and Hawkes put in a decent shot, which the custodian again dealt with. Barnes followed on with another centre, and a lovely shot by Ross just skimmed the bar.

The homesters attacking again, Wassell missed his kick and a corner resulted. Eaton placed nicely, but Dunn succeeded in effecting a clearance. A hard drive by Penman looked promising, but an opponent got in the way, and the ball went behind off him. Barnes placed well from the corner kick, and the ball was headed just by the post. Bob Hawkes also had hard luck a moment later, making a dashing attempt to get through from a centre by Eaton, and Bristol were very fortunate in saving at the expense of another corner. Nothing accrued, and when Bob gave Ross a fine opening, the latter sent high and wide.

After this the Rovers got away, and hesitation on the part of Lindsay in leaving his goal nearly spelt disaster at the outset. Lewis obtained possession, but McEwen by a desperate effort spoiled his shot, though he could not get near enough to rob him, and the ball went high over. Ross missed by inches at the other end; then the visitors broke away for a second time, and, profiting by a misunderstanding on the part of the Luton defence, Lewis got an opportunity and scored with a fast shot.

This was decidedly hard lines on the local men, who had been having practically all the play. The Rovers, indeed, had been showing very poor form, and what combination there was was all on the Luton side. Encouraged by their success, however, they performed much better, though the homesters pressed them very severely. Bob Hawkes seeing a possible chance let fly, and only just missed the mark, and after Lindsay had saved from Clark, Luton returned to the attack and sent in two or three good shots. In saving one Cartlidge had to give a corner, but again nothing resulted.

A few moments before the interval there was a scrimmage in front of the Bristol goal, and the spectators watched with breathless interest, but the defence prevailed, and the teams crossed over with the Rovers leading by a goal to nil. On the play the visitors certainly did not merit their advantage, but then it is the goals that count and not the play, and the moral victories with which Luton have had to be content do not show up very well in the League table.

In the second half a change was made in the Luton front string, Hawkes going centre and Penman outside. The visitors were the first to get away, but the homesters cleared from a dangerous looking middle from the left and went to the other end, where Bob Hawkes tested the custodian and Ross forced a corner. Cartlidge cleared from the kick, and then Fred Hawkes gave the visitors a corner, the first they had had. This was not improved upon, but directly after Smith sent in a lightning shot, which brought Lindsay to the ground. He was unable to clear at first but luckily had matters to himself, and was able to do so before any of the forwards got up.

The Rovers having had another corner, Luton went away in determined style and kept up a prolonged attack on the Bristol goal. From a corner placed by Barnes, the ball was shot against the crossbar and Cartlidge then tipped it over. Barnes placed once more, and a scrimmage ensued right in the very mouth of goal. Cartlidge seemed to be beaten all over, and two or three efforts were made to just put on the finishing touch, but again fortune favoured the Rovers and in some mysterious way the goal was saved. How it was done it is impossible to say, but when Cartlidge realised the fact he fairly danced with joy.

Luton had several more corners after this, and at last, when the spectators had almost given up hope, Ross equalised with a splendid shot. A scene of wild enthusiasm ensued and it was taken for granted that Luton were now safe for a draw even if they did not win. Just before the finish, however, the Rovers were given a corner, and from this Clark scored the winning goal.

It was a terrible disappointment for Luton, after saving the game, as they thought, to be defeated at the last moment, and Bristol were exceedingly lucky to get away with the two points. On the general run of play, Luton had been streets in front of their opponents, and were attacking two-thirds of the time, but when the Rovers did get away they went full steam ahead for goal, and it was this directness of method which proved their salvation.

Until Luton impart more vigour and dash to their attack they never will score goals. I suppose the directors had very little choice in the matter on Saturday, but there can be no doubt that Penman has been given too prolonged a trial. Had he been a local man, I feel sure he would have been discarded long ago. He plays well enough in mid-field, but near goal he has no dash and no resource, and his shooting is of the feeblest possible description. I verily believe that he has been the chief cause of Luton's repeated failures, and should think even the powers that be realise it now.

Ross is one of our best forwards and he again played a good game on Saturday, while Barnes is showing wonderful improvement. Eaton is not performing as well as last season and if he does not come on, it is highly probable that Roland Brown would render more effective service. I was told a fortnight ago that Watford were whipping themselves because they let Roland go.

Bob Hawkes, as already stated, was handicapped by lameness, but nevertheless he did as much shooting—and some of it very good—as any of the forwards, and given his usual finishing power, I feel convinced that he would prove a great acquisition to the forwards. With Ross, Lamberton, and Hawkes as the inside men, we should have a more effective forward line than by any other arrangement of the men available.

Of course, what we really want is more weight, and there is not a team played against this season with which we have not suffered by comparison in this respect. With more weight, Luton must have scored from two or three of the scrimmages that took place on Saturday.

The halves played a very good game, Pritchard quite justifying his inclusion, but the backs struck me as being a trifle erratic, Mac, the brilliant, being inclined to take on himself more work than he could properly do. Although Lindsay had very little to do in goal, I

question whether he had any chance with the shots that scored, owing to his view being obstructed.

The visitors were a good bustling team, but they were not quite so strong as I expected. The forwards, Lewis especially, were smart when they got going, the halves were some good workers, Dunn was a resolute back, and Cartledge was a capable custodian. All the same they were extremely lucky to snatch a victory.

Luton have now played eight Southern League matches, and have only one solitary victory to their credit. In the eight games they have scored only four goals, and yet, although the record reads so badly, they have scarcely ever been outplayed. The luck certainly has been dead against them, and we may hope that it will soon take a turn. We ought to get some points out of the next three matches, which include Portsmouth and Queen's Park Rangers at home and Brentford away.

Of the other Southern League matches, that which furnished the greatest surprise was the game at Tottenham, where the Spurs were beaten by Northampton by a goal to nil. Swindon also suffered their first defeat at home, Reading being victorious by 2 goals to 1, and Plymouth had a very easy task at Wellingborough, winning by 5 goals to nil. At Millwall, Portsmouth were beaten by 4 goals to 2, and with the exception of Wellingborough they have now had more goals scored against them than any other team in the League. At Southampton, Watford were beaten by 2 goals to 1.

The following is the League table up to date:

	Plyd.	Wn.	Dn.	Lt.	Goals.		P.
					For.	Agst.	
Reading	7	6	0	1	16	10	12
Southampton.....	7	4	8	0	11	7	11
Bristol Rovers	7	4	2	1	11	4	10
Northampton.....	8	5	0	2	10	8	10
New Brompton.....	7	3	3	1	13	8	9
Queen's Park Rangers...	7	4	1	2	14	12	9
West Ham United	8	3	3	2	9	7	9
Plymouth Arçyle.....	7	4	0	3	17	10	8
Portsmouth	7	4	0	3	16	16	8
Swindon	8	4	0	4	13	10	8
Fulham	7	2	3	2	5	5	7
Millwall	8	2	2	4	7	15	6
Tottenham Hotspur.....	7	2	1	4	5	8	5
Watford	6	2	0	4	5	6	4
Brighton and Hove.....	7	1	2	4	9	8	4
Brentford	7	1	1	5	6	11	3
Luton	8	1	1	6	4	12	3
Wellingborough	6	1	0	5	3	17	2

After many unsuccessful efforts, Luton have at last fixed up a match for next Saturday, for which date they have no League engagement. The visitors will be Dartford, a Kent League team, and chief interest will be caused by the appearance of a new centre for Luton, namely, H. Hunt, who was last season connected with Sheffield United. Penman will be tried at centre-half, and it may be of interest to state that Queen's Park Rangers were anxious to sign him on in that capacity, but found he had just been secured by Luton.