

The Southern League.

LUTON v. NEW BROMPTON.

Played at Luton on Saturday. Result:—

Luton	1 goal.
New Brompton	nil.

The teams were as follow:—

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

New Brompton—Griffiths; White and Walton; Bull, Watts, and Elliott; Felton, McKee, Leigh, Morris, and Lagar.

Referee, Mr. A. J. Kipps (London).

Although Ross has proved himself to be the best and most consistent of our forwards, especially from the goal-scoring point of view, the seeming misfortune of his absence on Saturday was really a blessing in disguise, for it necessitated a re-arrangement of the forwards, with the happiest possible results.

When I say the happiest possible results, I mean as regards the effect on the play and not on the directors, some of whom were in any thing but a happy frame of mind, owing to my criticism last week and to the fact that they were compelled to do what I said they ought to have done months ago. It was the latter circumstance which seemed to have the most irritating effect.

As originally arranged, Moody was to appear in the centre, and our ridiculous right wing was to be preserved in all its ineffectiveness. But when Ross dropped out, Moody was the only man who could be put in his place, and then the common-sense of some of the directors prevailed over the prejudices of the others sufficiently to allow Lamberton to be transferred to the centre, Bob Hawkes was induced to take the inside-right position, and Eaton returned to his old place at outside.

The experiment thus unwillingly adopted turned out a great success; the attack was brighter than it had been for a long time past, and Lamberton even exceeded my expectations at centre, for he settled down at once and played a grand game all the way through, despite the merciless knocking about he received from men who were nearly double his weight and who were exasperated at their inability to keep him in check by fair means.

The weather was decidedly favourable for the match, but the attendance was the poorest this season, less than £50 being taken at the gate. This, of course, was the result of the humiliating defeat experienced at Fulham, coming, as it did, on top of many other disappointments in the Southern League.

New Brompton, who were weakened by the absence of Barnfather and Turner, won the toss, and took advantage of a fairly strong breeze which was blowing towards the Bury Farm end. Luton, however, were the first to get away, Barnes making the running and putting in a fine centre, from which Lamberton headed behind. The homesters renewed their overtures on the left without effect, and then the right wing joined in the attack, and the ball was placed nicely across the mouth of goal, but unfortunately it was over the heads of the other forwards, and the defence managed to gain relief.

A miss by Turner at the other end let in the visitors' left wing, but McEwen saved the situation, and Moody showed up with a good shot which Griffiths saved. After the Bromptonians had had a fruitless corner, Luton made a lively assault, and Moody had cleared all obstacles except White, who was on the ground and quite helpless so far as legitimate play was concerned. With an unscrupulousness that excited wonder by its very audacity, however, White saved what looked like being a certain goal by clinging to Moody round the waist and holding him until the other men got back.

Such an offence was very inadequately punished with a free kick, though, as it was outside the penalty line, nothing more could be given. A corner resulted from Pritchard's kick, and Bob Hawkes was responsible for a lovely shot which just missed the bar. After the visitors had made a spirited but unsuccessful attack on the Luton goal, Luton again assumed the upper hand, and there were loud appeals for a penalty when Lamberton was brought down in front of goal just as he was trying to convert a well-placed kick by McEwen.

But a still greater misfortune befel the home-sters a minute or two later, Lamberton recovering himself, after being fouled, and scoring a magnificent goal, only to find it disallowed and Brompton "punished" for their offence by having a free kick against them. It was desperately hard lines on Luton, and one could scarcely be surprised at the demonstrations of disapproval which came from all parts of the ground.

The Brompton defenders, finding fouling the best paying game, indulged themselves to the top of their bent, and it was not long before Lamberton was again tripped, this time as he was in the act of taking a centre from Barnes. The visitors then created a diversion, and Leigh and Morris came very near scoring, but Luton saved their goal by giving a corner, which was placed behind.

Lindsay cleared well from a good shot by Watts, and Bob Hawkes and Lamberton transferring the play, Luton maintained the pressure right up to the interval, but though many good openings were made, there was no score, and the teams crossed over with a blank sheet. The homesters so far, had certainly been the better team, but not to such an extent as to monopolise the play. Still, had they had two goals when Lamberton scored and when Moody in all probability would have scored but for the foul, it would only have been in accordance with their merits.

In the second half the play was of a ding-dong character, Luton constantly attacking and New Brompton almost as constantly fouling. Dirtier tactics than those adopted by the visiting defence have never been seen on the Luton ground, and to simply give a free kick at every deliberate repetition of the offence seemed a very weak way of dealing with the evil. Surely the chief offender should have been cautioned, and, if he persisted in his conduct, ordered off.

There was practically only one team in it in this half, Lindsay having little or nothing to do. Bob Hawkes got in two or three good shots to start with, and Lamberton also sent in a beauty, which Griffiths saved. Play had to be suspended for a few moments as a result of Eaton getting hurt, and later on he got another knock, which incapacitated him and eventually caused his retirement.

From a fine centre by Barnes, Griffiths punted the ball in the air, and then Lamberton sent in a brilliant shot, which White was lucky to save at the expense of a corner. Never had Luton shown a livelier attack than now, and the only relief obtained by the Bromptonians was when the whistle sounded for a foul. Most of these fouls took place outside the penalty line, but at last Moody was grounded within the fatal area.

This was about ten minutes from the finish, and the spectators watched with breathless interest while the referee went to consult the linesman, who was in a good position to see. When it was seen that a penalty had been awarded, the excitement became intense, and coming at such a juncture, there are not many players who could find themselves entrusted with the responsibility of the kick without being unnerved.

Bob Hawkes, however, appeared to be as cool as a cucumber when he stepped to the front; he waited patiently until the whistle sounded, and then let fly with a shot which gave the custodian no chance at all. When the ball was safely in the net, the pent-up feelings of the spectators found relief in such a display of enthusiasm as has seldom been witnessed. It was not so much the thought of victory that gave the satisfaction, as the feeling that the reprehensible tactics of the visitors had at last met with the punishment they deserved, and that the persevering efforts of the homesters, in face of great discouragement, had received their due reward.

Luton well held their own in the concluding minutes of the game, and there was another demonstration as the players left the field. Never had victory been more thoroughly earned than on this occasion, and its importance may be judged from the League table, Luton having gone up a couple of notches and now being fifth from the bottom.

One pleasing feature of the match, from a Luton point of view, was that, in spite of all provocation, the Lutonians strictly played the game, and left the fouling to their opponents. For once in a way, there were no weak spots in the home team, though some players, of course, came out more prominently than others. For energy and determination, McEwen set a splendid example, and it was well followed by the other men. Turner gave a very good account of himself, and the consequence was that Lindsay had little to do in goal, but he did that little well.

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At half back both White and Fred Hawkes showed good form, but it was Pritchard who caught the eye most, and he really gave a fine exhibition, both in defence and attack. It is no disparagement to the others to say that, on Saturday's showing, Pritchard is much too good a man to be left out of the team.

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Perhaps I had better not eulogise the front string too freely, or some of my friends on the directorate may say I have an undue partiality for the forwards of my own choice. But if I did unburden myself last week with unusual frankness, it was only because I knew things had gone too far for it to do any harm and because other means of securing an alteration had been exhausted.

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Weeks and weeks ago I urged, privately at any rate, that Lamberton was the one who ought to be played at centre-forward, seeing that he was the man with the most dash and was always happiest when in the thick of the fray, and I had a letter which Lamberton wrote to me in the close season in answer to my inquiries, and in which he stated that his favourite positions were inside-right or centre-forward. And yet for weeks past, he has been absolutely wasted at outside right, while League points and Cup prospects have been frittered away in order to give trials to almost anybody who came along.

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Lamberton himself clearly proved who was in the right, and without lavishing praise on him, I am confident no one will challenge the accuracy of the statement when I say that neither this season nor last have we had a centre-forward who played as good a game as Lamberton played on Saturday. Barnes and Moody were likewise in capital fettle, the latter showing quite his old form. Bob Hawkes rendered an excellent account of himself at inside-right and Eaton did very well at outside until he was hurt. He was off the field for some time, but when Luton scored the goal, he came on again and had another try, but was unable to do much. Possibly, the best proof of the effectiveness of the forward line was the fact that Ross was not missed.

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On Saturday next, Luton will visit Wellingborough, where I hope to see them bag a brace of points. Lamberton will again play centre-forward, and Ross, I understand, will probably play inside-right, with Roland Brown outside, Eaton being unable to take part. Moody will again appear at inside-left.

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