

The Southern League.

LUTON v. QUEEN'S PARK RANGERS.

Played at Park Royal on Saturday.

Result:—

Luton	3 goals.
Queen's Park Rangers ...	2 goals.

The teams were as follow:—

Luton—Platt; Blackett and McCurdy; F. Hawkes, White, and R. Hawkes; Warner, Macdonald, Brown, Pickering, and Barnes.

Queen's Park Rangers—Kingsley; Lyon and Newlands; Yenson, Hitch, and Downing; Murphy, Sugden, Bevan, Ryder, and Gardner.

Referee, Mr. G. H. Muir (Southampton).

Last season Queen's Park Rangers furnished Luton with their solitary away win, but they have been performing in such a creditable manner during the opening weeks of the present season that it was felt a draw on Saturday would be a highly satisfactory result. It will be observed the right wing had been re-arranged, Gallacher dropping out and allowing Warner to occupy the position he usually played at Tottenham two years since, and Macdonald taking the vacancy thus created at inside-right. This alteration had proved an absorbing topic of conversation among the local critics, but as the result proved so satisfactory, I presume the directors will not have a vote of censure passed upon their action. On the Rangers' side, Lyon was making his initial appearance of the season in the Southern League, and Bevan, who had been looked upon as a doubtful starter, also decided to turn out. Therefore they were at full strength, and were pretty confident of reversing last year's result.

Bob Hawkes, whose photo adorned the local match card, won the toss, and naturally played with the wind and sun at his back, a by no means small advantage, for there was a pretty keen breeze on. The first outstanding incident was an earnest of things to come, for a nice touch by Brown to Macdonald was passed over to Warner, who was observed to be sailing away towards Kingsley with the ball. But Downing effectually prevented danger by a deliberate foul on Warner, who was brought down rather heavily, receiving a nasty cut on the knee. The resulting place kick was put well over the goal by Blackett.

A minute or so later Warner again secured the ball and this time he was permitted to drop across his centre, and it ultimately found its way behind Kingsley off Pickering's shoulder. The Rangers' goalkeeper managed to scoop the ball out, but the referee gave a free kick instead of a goal, presumably for Pickering charging Kingsley, but this was a big blunder, as the ball was well over the line before the Luton inside-left came into contact with Kingsley, and a goal should certainly have been awarded. This decision might have had serious consequences, for the ball was soon at the opposite end, following some forcing play in the centre of the field. Murphy eventually received from Bevan, but his final shot was a wild one, and Luton breathed again. A leading goal at this stage might have made a big difference, and it was fortunate for Luton the Irish international did not steady himself.

The exchanges were pretty fast and Warner gave Brown a splendid pass, and Sandy let drive from almost 30 yards' range with a shot not more than a foot off the ground, which looked a scorer almost all the way, but Kingsley brought off a brilliant save by turning the ball round the post at the expense of a corner kick, which came to nothing. Gardner raised the hopes of the home defenders by cleverly tricking Blackett and putting the ball across the goal-mouth to Sugden, who was well placed, but he missed badly, and danger was once more averted. Fred Hawkes was then penalised for a foul throw-in, and following this Platt had rather an anxious time, but the Rangers failed to steady themselves, and after some minute or two of attacking on the part of the Rangers the ball was eventually sent wide of the uprights.

The game had been in progress over twenty minutes before anything tangible resulted. Then a miskick by Newlands let in Warner once more, and this time Barnes was able to open the scoring with a clever cross attempt after taking the ball from his comrade on the opposite extreme. From the cheering on the stand it was evident a fair number of Lutonians had made the journey. Although a goal behind, it was patent the Rangers had not given up hope, and Ryder almost equalised with a fine drive which whizzed over Platt's head in a somewhat alarming fashion. Sugden tested the Luton goalkeeper with a beauty just after, and Platt was deservedly cheered for his fine clearance.

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A rather unusual incident happened hereabouts. Bob Hawkes fouled a Rangers' forward just a yard or so outside the penalty area, but the Luton players, lining up, effectually prevented the downfall of their goal. Half-time was now fast approaching, and it appeared a single goal would separate the teams at that stage. But to the delight of the Lutonians present, a "curly one" from Warner dropped cleared of Kingsley and found a resting place in the net. I rather think the wind was partly responsible for this goal, for Kingsley evidently judged the ball was going over. It appeared to drop about a yard from the bar, and the Rangers' goalkeeper made little effort to stop the shot entering the net, although he did put up his hands. But even better was to follow, for with only a minute to go before retiring, Barnes met a pass from the opposite wing and beat Kingsley all ends up with a terrific drive from quite twenty yards' range. Thus Luton were leading by the large margin of three clear goals at the interval, and it must be a long time since such a pronounced lead has been obtained in a Southern League away fixture.

On resuming, it was evident the Rangers meant to retrieve the situation if possible, and they were soon swarming round Platt with the ball. Sugden and Bevan were both almost on the goal-line and the former managed to touch the sphere through. This happened after less than a couple of minutes' play, and was notice to Luton that they were not yet out of the wood. Right well did they tumble to the situation, and Barnes immediately afterwards forced a corner, which, however, was easily cleared. Barnes and Pickering came away again, and the latter almost netted after some clever passing, but the referee brought the ball back for a throw-down, he having stopped the game on account of Sugden getting injured in midfield previous to the run.

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Luton's left wing pair repeated their performance a minute later, and again Pickering only just failed to find the net, Kingsley making a grand clearance. But though they were now facing the wind, Luton continued to more than hold their own in midfield; indeed, they more than once promised to increase the lead. Fifteen minutes from the finish Barnes gave Brown a fine opening, but Sandy's elevation was a trifle too high and his shot went well over. A few minutes later Brown got in a beauty which Kingsley just managed to drop on and get away.

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The Rangers made a spurt about ten minutes before the close and succeeded in forcing a corner, but the Luton defence held out in good style. Five minutes later Macdonald broke clean through the home defence and it looked a thousand to one on his scoring, but apparently he kicked the ground, for he gave Kingsley a very tame one to handle, and the ex-Newcastle goalie would no doubt thank his lucky star for the let-off. The crowd were beginning to leave the ground when a breakaway by the Rangers left Ryder in possession of the ball, which he quickly disposed of by beating Platt for the second time during the match. But as only two minutes remained, there was little hope for the Rangers, and with Luton content to play on the defensive the end came as recorded above.

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While admitting the run of the game scarcely warranted a three-goal lead at the interval, I think Luton well deserved their success, for, curiously, although the Rangers scored a couple during the second half, Luton played even better than before. Certainly if the Rangers were entitled to two goals during this period, Luton were good for as many, and nothing but bad fortune prevented an increase of their goal average.

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Luton's forward work would be an eye-opener to those who saw the display against Fulham the previous Saturday. I cannot say the greatest improvement came about through the alteration on the right wing, although Warner's centres were always dangerous, but it was on the left where the improvement was the most marked. Barnes played by far his

best game this season, and this was quite apart from his welcome two goals. Pickering also played a magnificent game; indeed, this pair were the star wing on the field. As usual, Brown was well watched, but he managed to keep his wings going, and in addition got in several good attempts on his own without any luck, or he should have added to his goal record.

All the defenders played well, White rivaling Hitch in getting through a vast amount of work in a thoroughly capable manner, while his comrades in this line were seen to great advantage, Bob Hawkes, always a favourite with the Rangers, doing many brilliant things. The three defenders further behind all did well, possibly McCurdy giving his best display so far, but there was very little in it, and I am sure Luton spectators will give them an unanimous vote of thanks for preserving the undefeated record away from home.

Coming to the Rangers, I rather think Kingsley should have prevented one goal at least, but he kept out several nasty shots and was not the sole cause of his team's downfall. As a matter of fact, it was Luton's fine play and not any particular weakness by their opponents that earned the victory. Still, I think Lyon and Newlands were by no means as good as Luton's pair of backs, and if there was a weak spot this was the one.

Hitch was decidedly the outstanding player on his side, both at centre-half and centre-forward, for he changed places with Bevan during the later stages, when the latter found he could scarcely keep up the pace as a result of his injury at Plymouth. With the exception of Bevan, the Rangers' attack was pretty hot at times, and they have a couple of fine wings, Sugden being a really clever player, although possibly a bit slight to stand the rough-and-tumble of a season's work. Gardner also played a good game on the outside-left, while Murphy's raking stride many times brought the ball through in a way not too comforting to the Luton spectators present. His centres, however, were not too accurate, and thus he somewhat spoilt his work.

Southampton did very well on Saturday by going to Reading and winning by 2 goals to nil, but the Biscuiteers do not appear to be quite as strong as last season. Plymouth accomplished a similar performance at Watford, but those of us who have seen the two teams were not much surprised at that. West Ham delighted their somewhat disconsolate supporters by beating Brentford by 2-0, and the other results were:—Bristol Rovers 2, Millwall 1; Brighton 2, Norwich City 1; New Brompton 0, Swindon, 0; Portsmouth 4, Northampton 0.

The following is the League table up to date:—

	Goals.						
	Plyd.	Wn.	Lt.	Do.	For.	Aast.	Pts
Plymouth Argyle...	5	4	0	1	10	2	9
Bristol Rovers	5	4	0	1	14	3	9
Portsmouth	6	2	0	4	11	3	8
Millwall	5	3	1	1	7	3	7
Fulham	5	2	0	3	6	2	7
Luton	5	3	1	1	9	5	7
Brentford	5	3	2	0	5	4	6
Tottenham H.	5	2	1	2	4	3	6
Queen's Park Rans.	5	2	2	1	9	5	5
Southampton	4	2	1	1	5	3	5
West Ham	5	2	3	0	4	5	4
Watford	5	1	2	2	4	6	4
Brighton	5	2	3	0	5	9	4
Reading	5	1	3	1	6	8	3
New Brompton	5	1	3	1	2	11	3
Norwich City.....	5	0	3	2	4	9	2
Swindon	5	0	4	1	2	10	1
Northampton	5	0	5	0	2	18	0

The complete reports edition of Saturday's "Football Evening News" contained an excellent portrait of Peter Platt, Luton's goal-keeper.

Luton Town v. Bristol Rovers and Bassett v. the World for supplying a good Overcoat or Mackintosh to watch the match in.—Note address: 28, Wellington-street.—[ADVT.]

I owe Barnes an apology. Last week I ventured to say that he could not be regarded as a really dangerous player, and then he goes and rubs it in by scoring two goals—one of them a real beauty—against a team which, up till the previous Saturday, had not had a goal registered against it. Well, it is rather rough on me, but nevertheless, the rougher he makes it in this way the better I shall like it.

Luton's victory at Park Royal will greatly add to the interest attaching to the visit of Bristol Rovers next Saturday. The Rovers are undoubtedly one of the strongest combinations in the League this season, and so far have not met with a single defeat. They are evidently very intent upon maintaining their unbeaten certificate, for in the Western League match at Fulham on Monday, they were represented by what was practically a reserve team.

Hitherto Luton have been particularly unfortunate in their matches with the Rovers, and only once—two seasons ago—have they succeeded in beating them, and then it was by a palpably offside goal scored by Peter Turner. Last season Luton probably would have created a sensation by beating the Rovers at Bristol had not the homesters been given a penalty in the last few minutes, thus enabling them to pull the game out of the fire. For the match next Saturday, Luton will rely upon the team that did so well at Park Royal. The kick-off is fixed for 3.30.

To-day (Thursday) Luton were playing Southern United away, and on Monday next they will be at home to Swindon (kick-off 4 o'clock), both games being in the United League. For Monday's game I think a trial might very well be given to Latheron at outside-right, for I hear glowing accounts of his performance last week with the Reserves. Bert Else might also be given a trial, for the only way of bringing these men up to concert pitch is by giving them chances in first-class company.

Anderson, I hear, has gone back to Kilmar-nock to nurse his injured ankle, but has promised to return when sound.

Yet another entrance is to be made to the Luton ground, this time at the Dunstable end of the new stand. Great difficulty was experienced at the Fulham match in getting the people to move down, and the consequence was that while there was a big crowd at one end there was plenty of room at the other. The new entrance is designed to equalise matters.