

The Southern League.

LUTON v. BRENTFORD.

Played at Luton on Saturday. Result:—

Brentford 2 goals.

Luton nil.

The teams were as follow:—

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

Brentford—Whittaker; Howarth and Riley; Jay, Parsonage, and Tomlinson; Hartley, Shanks, Corbett, Hobson, and Underwood.

Referee, Mr. H. Smith (Boston).

Although, taken on the whole, Brentford have done remarkably well this season, they have not the name of some of the other teams which have visited Luton this season, and consequently it was not anticipated that they would cause Luton any serious trouble. In fact, with the exception of Brighton, they were regarded as supplying the homesters with the easiest task up to date.

A bitter disappointment was in store, however. But of that, more anon. The weather was fine, but dull and threatening, and the attendance fell considerably short of the average Southern League gates, there not being more than five thousand spectators.

The ground was in a very bad state, owing to excessive moisture, and this proved the undoing of the Luton team. Bob Hawkes won the toss, but it gave little or no advantage. The homesters were the first to attack, and from a corner-kick, placed by Warner, Brown headed behind. A spell of midfield play followed, and then Luton again acting on the aggressive, Barnes put in a dangerous-looking centre, but offside against Brown relieved.

The visitors transferred play to the other end, and a mistake by Fred Hawkes letting them in, Shanks just missed the upright with a lovely shot. Brentford now did some amount of pressing, and the home defence not being quite so sound as usual, the spectators had rather an anxious time, but eventually the attention of the busy Bees was shaken off.

Luton then made the running. Brown was fouled close in to goal, but instead of giving the penalty applied for, the referee gave Sandy himself offside. Directly afterwards, the Luton centre-forward had another fine opening, but his shot went straight to Whittaker, who was able to get the ball away. After the custodian had saved from Macdonald, Bob Hawkes gave Pickering a grand chance, but the inside-left tried too long a shot and sent wide of the mark.

A fine bit of play by Underwood next attracted attention, and Platt had to save, as he did again from Shanks, who was placed in a very favourable position. Luton made a pretty good response, and Whittaker saved a smart cross shot from Warner by turning it round the post. Brentford cleared from the corner-kick, but Blackett returned into the mouth of goal, and a moment later Bob Hawkes sent in a ripping shot, which passed just over the bar.

Luton's most promising movement, however, followed upon a corner placed by Warner. Brentford cleared from this, but the homesters returned to the attack, Brown, Pickering, and Barnes showing the way, and the centre from the last-named looked like doing the trick, but unluckily the others got just a bit in front of it, and so the opportunity was lost.

Brentford replied, and Hartley succeeded in netting, but was given offside. Platt afterwards kicked away from an attempt by Hobson, but presently the Bees again got on visiting terms. Platt saved one tolerably warm shot, but almost before he recovered himself, Hobson again secured possession and drew first blood with a splendid shot.

From now to the interval Luton made desperate efforts to retrieve the position, and a good many shots were put in. A beauty by Bob Hawkes just missed the upright by inches, and Macdonald also made a grand but unsuccessful attempt. Later on Pickering made a determined dash, and looked like going through, but was brought down a couple of yards inside the penalty area. The referee, however, disregarded appeals and allowed play to proceed.

There was no further score, and Brentford crossed over with a lead of one goal to nil. They scarcely deserved it on the play, but still their long swinging passes and robust methods made them dangerous whenever they got going, whereas Luton frequently gave themselves away by trying close combination which might have come off all right on a dry ground

but was totally out of place on a heavy, slippery pitch.

When play was resumed Luton at once made tracks for the Brentford goal, but though they forced a corner, their efforts were not such as to raise any great hopes among the spectators. Once Barnes might have done good service, but he shot instead of being content with a centre, and the ball went the wrong side of the net. After a little desultory play in midfield, the visitors broke away, and Underwood put in a centre which looked promising for another goal, but Corbett missed the opportunity and McCurdy cleared.

Presently Platt saved again from a shot by Underwood, and then Luton went to the other end, where Macdonald received close in and let drive for all he was worth. Whittaker got the ball out from just under the bar, but there were loud appeals for a goal from the Luton players and the spectators in the vicinity, it being asserted that the custodian took the ball as it rebounded from the top net. However that may have been, the referee allowed the game to proceed, and this piece of hard luck had a discouraging effect upon the home team.

Brentford immediately went down the field, and Platt was called upon to save again and again. He did his work in first-class style, but was at last beaten by a chance shot from Corbett, the ball finding its way in close to the upright. The Bees were, of course, delighted, and it was now evident that little short of a miracle could save the homesters from defeat.

The miracle did not happen. Luton went on in the old sweet way, tapping the ball from one to another, and absolutely blind to the fact that the game they were playing was not at all adapted to the conditions. In spite of this, they forced the play into the mouth of the Brentford goal on several occasions, and once Riley saved marvellously from an effort by Brown, following upon a corner placed by Barnes. At the other end, Platt made quite as smart a save from a shot by Corbett, who had no one but the goalkeeper to deal with after receiving a centre from Hartley.

The concluding stages of the game were fought out in a very bad light, and this added to the gloom which had settled on the spectators as a result of Luton's unexpected defeat. The homesters tried hard at various times, but they did not try in the right way, and were deservedly beaten by a more sensible, if not a better, team.

The Brentford tactics were exactly what they should have been. They played a vigorous, open game, and trusted more to dash than science. Their vigour not infrequently took an illegitimate form, and they were often tripping and fouling their opponents, but still they were not quite so bad in this respect as some of the onlookers seemed to think.

Nor did the referee deserve all the blame with which he was credited. Of course, he might have allowed that goal which was so eagerly claimed as the result of Macdonald's shot, and he might also have given a couple of penalties. They were very near things. Some referees would have given them, but others would not, and Mr. Smith gave the defending side the benefit of the doubt—that is, if he had any doubt; he certainly did not show it.

Not much need be said as to individual players. If Sandy Brown did not succeed it was not for the want of trying, but perhaps Macdonald was the most conspicuous of the forwards, and Warner was the least effective. What on earth has come over the outside-right? Until recently he was the bright particular star in a brilliant constellation, but in the last two or three matches he has played a finnickin game, which is as tantalising to behold as it is unproductive in result.

The halves have been seen to better advantage. Fred Hawkes generally shows up well where hard, bustling work is required, but he quite failed to hold Underwood and Hobson. Bob also was not quite happy, and even White did not revel in the mud to the extent that he has done on some other occasions. The Lacks were only moderate, but no fault could be found with Platt, who was often hard pressed and acquitted himself well.

For the visitors, Whittaker played a great game in goal, and the backs were pretty reliable, but the halves took the eye most, Farsonage especially being in great form. The forwards also gave a splendid account of themselves, combining well without keeping close enough to get in each other's way, and always threatening danger when allowed anything like a run.

In the other Southern League matches, Southampton were beaten by a goal to nil at Portsmouth, and Plymouth Argyle suffered defeat at Swindon by 2 goals to 1, whilst Millwall were unexpectedly vanquished on their own ground by Norwich City, Ross, who is said to have played a magnificent game, scoring the only goal of the match as the result of a fine individual effort. The Spurs beat Northampton, and Fulham just got the better of West Ham, but Bristol Rovers rubbed it in to Watford to the tune of 6 goals to 1. Brighton surprised the Rangers by making a draw at Park Royal, and Reading proved victorious at New Brompton by 3 goals to nil.

The following is the League table up to date:—

	Goals.						
	Plyd.	Wn.	Lt.	Dn.	For.	Agst	Pts
Tottenham H.....	12	8	2	2	20	7	18
Fulham	13	6	1	6	14	6	18
Bristol Rovers.....	13	7	4	2	29	18	16
Luton	12	6	3	3	27	14	15
Plymouth Argyle....	13	6	4	3	18	12	15
Brentford	13	6	4	3	14	12	15
Southampton	12	6	3	3	16	14	15
Portsmouth	13	5	3	5	21	14	15
Millwall	13	5	5	3	17	15	13
Norwich City	12	5	5	2	17	14	12
Reading	13	5	6	2	16	17	12
Queen's Park Rans.	13	5	6	2	21	18	12
Northampton	12	5	6	1	10	23	11
Watford	12	3	6	3	14	21	9
West Ham United...	13	4	9	0	12	17	8
New Brompton	13	2	7	4	8	33	8
Swindon	12	2	6	4	10	18	8
Brighton and Hove	12	2	8	2	8	19	6

The gate on Saturday amounted to only £105.

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

On Saturday next the first team have to visit Norwich City, and the Reserves will be at home to Chelsea Reserves.

The draw for the fourth qualifying round of the English Cup Competition took place on Monday, and as a result Luton will have to visit the Crystal Palace on Saturday week. Probably no harder task could have been set the team, judging both from the Palace record and the exhibition they gave at Luton the other day. I have not the least hesitation in saying that Luton will have to go for all they are worth in order to get through.

Watford are more fortunate in having to entertain Southport Central, and Swindon Town will comfortably get through a similar duty for West Hampstead. Norwich City ought not to experience much difficulty at Sheppey, and the same may be said of Northampton, who have to visit West Stanley. Brighton, however, have anything but an enviable undertaking in visiting Glossop.