

The Southern League.

LUTON v. QUEEN'S PARK RANGERS.

Played at Luton 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; J. Mayes, Macdonald, E. Dobson, Pickering, and Barnes.

Queen's Park Rangers—Howes; White and Newlands; Yenson, Hitch, and Downing; Sugden, Fletcher, Murphy, Ryder, and Bevan.

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

Perhaps the bitterly cold wind which prevailed on Saturday affected the attendance, or possibly the three-goal-to-nil beating received at Fulham kept the fair-weather sportsmen away, but whatever the reason, the unpleasant fact remains that the gate was the smallest taken at a Southern League match this season. There were not more than four thousand present, and this shows an alarming falling-off from the crowds of seven or eight thousand which were the rule at the beginning of the season.

The Luton directors made another experiment with their forward line, E. Dobson, the amateur from Page Green Old Boys, substituting Sandy Brown at centre, while J. Mayes was given a further trial at outside-right. The visitors were quite at full strength, and consequently the game was looked forward to with some amount of trepidation by the Luton supporters.

Anxiety was deepened when it was seen that the Rangers had won the toss and therefore secured the advantage of an unusually strong breeze. Despite the rain of the early morning, the ground was in better condition than for some time past, and, apart from the wind, there was nothing to interfere with the play.

As might have been expected, the Rangers were soon making tracks for the Luton goal, but they were kept well in hand, and the home-sters were the first to become dangerous. Dobson and Mayes made the running, and a corner resulted, but was not improved upon. The visitors retaliated, and Blackett gave a corner, which was well placed by Bevan, but the ball was headed over.

It soon became evident that the game was going to be warmly contested, for Luton gallantly withstood the efforts of the Rangers to get away, and it was satisfactory to find Dobson showing excellent form in the centre. Barnes and Pickering were also going well, and a fine run on the left looked promising, but the Rangers' right back forced the ball over the line off Barnes.

The visitors, however, soon got a look-in, and Bevan sent in a splendid shot which was well saved by Platt. A couple of fouls against Hitch helped Luton a little, but the Rangers showed a disposition to play the one-back game, and the efforts of the homesters were several times spoiled on this account.

Presently Queen's Park became more pressing in their attentions, and Bevan, when making a run, was very heavily charged by Blackett, but the referee allowed it to pass muster, whilst a little later a foul was given against Bevan when it appeared to be the other way about. A free kick afterwards enabled the visitors to concentrate on the Luton goal, and in keeping them out, either McCurdy or Blackett handled the ball, but fortunately for Luton, the incident escaped official notice.

The pressure, however, became very keen, and had not Platt been in first-rate form, there is no knowing what might have happened. He saved again and again, but once Ryder had hard lines with a flying shot, the ball going just wide of the upright. The Londoners then had three successive free kicks given them by White, two for fouls and one for hands, but though they were in dangerous proximity to the Luton goal, nothing tangible resulted.

Eventually Ryder obtained possession from a throw-in, and scored with a good hard drive. Platt made a smart attempt to save, throwing himself full length, and was only just beaten. This was rather ominous, but after Blackett had given another corner, Luton were able to make some progress, Dobson being repeatedly in evidence. The amateur did at last net the ball, but offside nullified.

Then the Rangers came very near increasing their lead, Blackett making a rush and failing to stop Murphy. Platt, however, advanced to meet the Irish International, who took the ball wide of the upright, but a corner was given. Luton cleared from this and went to the other end, where a good centre gave Macdonald a fine chance, but he held on too long and one of the backs nipped in and spoiled the shot. All the Luton forwards then took a turn, and after Howes had saved a fine shot from Bob Hawkes, Dobson succeeded in equalising.

The amateur appeared to be well offside when he received the ball, but I learned subsequently that it touched one of the backs in transit and thus rendered the point a legiti-

mate one. This was the last incident of note before the interval, and the teams crossed over with honours easy.

It was confidently expected that with the wind in their favour, Luton would have little difficulty in making the game safe, but that scarcely proved to be the case, though for something like half-an-hour Platt was not troubled with a single shot. The home forwards, however, did not always finish too well.

Dobson came very near doing the trick from a centre by Barnes, Newlands just saving by kicking behind. Barnes placed beautifully from the flagstaff, and another corner followed. The outside-left again took the kick and from a return by Blackett, Dobson put in a header, Howes just tipping over the bar. Mayes again placed nicely, but the Rangers effected a clearance.

The relief was of short duration, and Blackett sending the ball up once more, Mayes made a good try, but hit the side net. Howes was fortunate to save a hot shot from Bob Hawkes. Then, when play in the second half had been in progress about a quarter of an hour, Blackett scored a lovely goal, after Howes had cleared from a beautiful centre by Barnes.

The spectators were very glad indeed to see this point, and Blackett came in for quite an ovation. Presently, Macdonald netted the ball a fourth time, but was given offside, and the same player soon afterwards had the misfortune to have another goal disallowed, owing to someone having made too close an acquaintance with the custodian.

A little later Pickering had very hard lines in not scoring, being only the fraction of a second too late to get in his kick, when a goal would have been a certainty, and then Howes had to give a corner to a centre by Macdonald. Barnes placed well, and Pickering had the satisfaction of scoring number three.

It now looked an easy thing for Luton, but strange to say, the Rangers showed up better after this reverse, and several times got on visiting terms with Platt. All the same for that, they ought not to have been allowed to have another goal. Macdonald was to blame in the first instance near midfield, as he might easily have disposed of the ball to advantage, but he hung to it until it was taken from him, and when the Rangers got to close quarters, Blackett had the mortification of turning a shot from Murphy through his own goal, quite out of Platt's reach.

Luton made spirited attempts to recover the lost ground, and once Pickering got quite clear from a pass by Dobson, but finished up with a shot which just missed the upright. This was the last thing of interest, and a good game ended in a victory for the homesters by three goals to two.

The play was a vast improvement on that shown when West Ham were being entertained a fortnight before, and both sides deserve credit for their excellent play under somewhat difficult conditions, each team being handicapped in turn by the strong wind. Taking the game all through, Luton were undoubtedly the better team, and were fully entitled to their victory. Barnes and Pickering played splendidly on the left wing, and Dobson created an excellent impression in the centre. He certainly knows how to play, and did some good work both on his own and in combination with the others. Mayes was scarcely so successful at outside, being a trifle slow in getting away.

The halves did good work, though Fred Hawkes was not always successful in his well-meant attempts. Blackett was the more prominent of the two backs, but he somewhat marred his exhibition by an unnecessary display of temper. Platt kept goal splendidly.

The Rangers are a well-balanced lot, and if Luton had not improved on their form of a fortnight before it would have gone hard with them. Howes kept goal well, the backs were in good form, and Hitch, at usual, worked like a Trojan at centre half. The Rangers also possess a smart string of forwards, and it speaks well for the Luton defence that they were so often kept in check.