

The Southern League.

LUTON v. BRENTFORD.

Played at Griffin Park on Saturday.
Result:—

Brentford 2 goals.

Luton 1 goal.

The teams were as under:—

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

Brentford—Whittaker; Watson and Riley; Jay, Parsonage, and Robotham; Hurtle, Shanks, Corbett, Hobson, and Underwood.

Referee, Mr. J. Brodie (Stafford).

A year or so back, Brentford were looked upon as easy prey, but a change has come over the scene, and this season they claim four Southern League points from Luton, thus joining Fulham in that particular. It will be noticed R. Hawkes was an absentee, and I understand he will be a doubtful starter in future away matches on account of business duties. Fortunately, Luton's position is safe, and points are not of such supreme importance as at this time last year, although of course a position as near the top as possible is the ambition of both the players and directors.

For the second away match in succession, the weather conditions were favourable; indeed, more so from a player's point of view than the fortnight previous, for they were not bothered by a glaring sun. Winning the toss meant little advantage under the circumstances, and this barren privilege fell to Brentford.

For the opening twenty minutes there was little else to record but a series of attacks by Brentford, but though chances innumerable fell to them they failed to take advantage of them. Naturally, Platt had something to do with this state of affairs by his alertness in keeping out those attempts which came to hand. Considering the pressure put upon the Luton defence, however, many more shots should have found their way to the target. So much were Luton acting on the defensive that miskicks were by no means infrequent, but time after time good luck came to their aid and a clean sheet was maintained.

About the only time Luton got dangerous during this period Pickering threw away the advantage by passing the ball to Macdonald, when a touch to Barnes was the obviously proper thing to do, Macdonald being well off-side at the time. At the opposite goal, in attempting to punch a long shot over the bar, Platt did not quite get at the ball and it dropped down directly in front of the goal, with the whole Brentford attack well up, but someone managed to drop behind and kick away from practically beneath the bar. This was a lucky thing for Luton, for the shot was really the final one of about half-a-dozen put in within a couple of minutes.

After all this pressure, it was something in the nature of a shock to the Brentford spectators to see Luton get a goal on the first occasion a shot was put in to Whittaker. Warner started the movement by a clever run, finishing up with a well-judged centre, which Brown passed over to Pickering, and the latter beating his man, let fly at goal while standing a yard or so wide. Whittaker made an attempt to stop the shot taking effect, but he only succeeded in knocking the ball into the side of the net.

Before the effect of this slice of good fortune had altogether passed away, Luton forced a corner, but F. Hawkes closed this incident by putting behind. He really got the ball by chance, for White, who had the best opportunity, miskicked badly, and it came to F. Hawkes before he was really aware of its proximity.

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Half-an-hour from the start an equaliser looked certain, when Blackett badly let in Hobson right on top of Platt, but Peter brought off a fine save, luckily for his side. A few minutes later, following a free kick taken by Watson, the Luton goal was again endangered, but Corbett made a terrible hash of an open goal. Another time Underwood got the better of a duel with Blackett, and racing away, sent across a square centre, which was not taken advantage of by his inside comrades.

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An even more dangerous attempt was made by Shanks, who forced his way through all opposition and enticed Platt to leave his goal as the only chance of saving his charge. Just before Platt could tackle the Brentford sharp-shooter, the latter put in a tremendous drive, which appeared certain to find the net, as no Lutonian stood in its way. But the elevation was an inch or so too high, and the ball hitting the crossbar went over the net instead of finding a resting-place inside. It was an extremely lucky moment for Luton, but as at Millwall in the first half, matters seemed shaping our way.

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After experiencing such a succession of Fortune's favours, the Luton players entered upon the second half with a good deal of confidence, and for a time they at least held their own but could not add to their score. Fouls were pretty frequent, although many were of a mere technical nature, and the players scarcely knew what to do in tackling, for Mr Brodie penalised the smallest offence.

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I was well placed for seeing all that took place when Gallacher was judged to have fouled one of the Brentford players near the centre of the field. He simply charged the player in question, but a foul was given, and from this the Bees had the good fortune to score the equalising goal. Underwood getting across a centre from the touch-line, Platt dropped the ball between his legs, and it remained stationary about a foot over the line for a second, when Platt made another attempt to get it out with Corbett in close attendance, but he only kicked it

further through. It was hard lines on Platt for his first mistake to spell disaster, but it is all in the game.

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There was still over half-an-hour to go, and with Luton playing up far better than in the first half, the game was not lost. Ten minutes later, however, what proved the winning point fell to Brentford, and over this goal strong complaints are made by the Luton players. Shanks was observed to be putting in one of his characteristic bursts when McCurdy went to tackle him, but rather to the surprise of the onlookers, Mac completely missed the ball as it came across, and, behold, Shanks was away with it. McCurdy at once claimed hands against Shanks, who would not have secured the ball at all only by knocking it down just before it reached the Luton back. But the referee paid no heed, and Shanks put in a shot which Corbett, following up, just turned in out of Platt's reach. There is no doubt the referee made a mistake, for the appeal was quite unanimous from the whole of the Luton defence in a position to see, and they visibly pulled up, or I rather think Corbett would not have been allowed to settle on the ball quite so easily.

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As a rule, for the final quarter of an hour the Bees were the attacking party, but they could not again beat Platt, who, but for his mistake over the goal mentioned, played a very fine game. But there was just one moment when a division of points appeared the most probable ending. Barnes got away with one of his dashes down the wing and dropped a high centre well in the middle of the goal-mouth. Sandy Brown cleverly met the ball with his head and appeared to turn it away from Whittaker into the top corner of the net, but the Bees' goalkeeper just managed to get at it and prevent it passing through. Although he could not quite hold the ball at the first attempt, he had the good fortune to get it away at a second, greatly to the relief of the crowd.

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Undoubtedly, on the run of the game all through, the Bees were able to claim the advantage, and the single-goal victory cannot be put down as a fluke. Still, having a lead at the interval, Luton have some cause to complain of the loss of both points, seeing they played the better football during the concluding half. It was a fast game, and Underwood was the especial favourite with the spectators, with his fine bursts down the touch-line, which he usually finished with a strong centre. He was the life and soul of the Brentford attack, although Shanks worked much harder than I have seen him. Parsonage also played a great game at centre-half, and is not far removed from being the best player in this position down South.

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On the Luton side there was not that understanding we saw against the Spurs; still, it could not be said that anyone played a bad game. White came back to his old position as if nothing had happened, although it was a month since his last game. Forward, Pickering played his usual clever game in midfield, and is quietly adding to his stock of goals, which did not amount to many early in the season when others were more successful in finding the net. Anyway, he had the honour of netting the 100th goal of the season.

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