

LUTON v. READING.

LUTON BEAT THEIR SOUTHERN LEAGUE RECORD BY A POINT.

Played at Reading on Monday. Result:

Luton 1 goal;

Reading 1 „

Team:—

Luton:—Platt; Blackett and McCurdy; F. Hawkes, Gallacher and H. Lane; Latheron, Warner, Brown, Pickering, and Barnes.

Reading:—Newbigging; Henderson and Watts; Gettins, Bannister and C. Brown; Bainbrigde, Higginson, McCafferty, Allman and Leonard.

Referee, Mr. A. E. Farrant (Bristol).

Originally arranged for next Saturday this Southern League fixture was brought forward to suit the convenience of Reading. Three changes were made in the team which so delighted local supporters against Southampton, although only MacDonald's absence was caused by injury, Reading also had several regular players away so the teams were practically on an equality in this respect, Herbert Smith being a notable absentee.

Only a small crowd assembled and the enthusiasm never assumed the proportions of a regular Southern League encounter. Reading won the toss and naturally took advantage of a fairly strong wind. At the start Reading's attack seemed likely to carry everything before them but they curled up

when they met Blackett and McCurdy and the final shot lacked sting.

However, Luton changed the scene of operations after a spell and Warner gave the ball a nice touch to Latheron in a very promising position. It appeared certain "Smiler" would get clean away but Watts brought him down badly, and the resulting free-kick was somewhat easily disposed of.

But this proved only a temporary relief and the play was once more at Platt's end. Once or twice Luton's goal escaped rather luckily but eventually a fine centre from Bainbridge was turned to account by Allman the ball travelling right across the goalmouth was missed by more than one player but the Reading inside left made no mistake and beat Platt easily with a fast shot.

Although as a rule the play continued in the vicinity of Luton's penalty area whenever the visiting forwards got away they appeared dangerous. Latheron was a continual source of worry to Watts and the latter's attentions were not always according to rule. From one of these bursts the equalising goal came about Latheron getting the better of Watts put across a fine centre which touched a Reading defender and went behind for a corner.

Barnes dropped this well in the goalmouth and Newbigging appeared to half hit the ball and Sandy Brown being as usual under such circumstances well up, the ball glanced off his head into the net.

Just before half-time Platt used rather poor judgment on coming out for the ball and missed it completely. Bainbridge had the chance of a lifetime but to the surprise of everybody he failed to direct the ball into the net but actually turned it in the opposite direction amid jeers from the crowd! It was a lucky escape for Luton as nothing barred the way.

With the score standing one each Luton were on pretty good terms with themselves at the interval especially as they would enjoy the advantages of the wind for the second half.

But as is pretty often the case, the force of the wind abated considerably after the restart and Reading continued to have the greater share of the game.

Still their shooting was very badly directed and Platt had comparatively little to do. Luton's goal had another lucky escape when Bannister putting in a surprise shot had the misfortune to strike the cross-bar and the ball rebounding into play was got away by Platt smothering the left wing pair right on the goal-line.

Several corners fell to Reading hereabouts but they failed to reap any advantage. While in fist-ing away a stiff shot from the left wing Platt's luck star was in the ascendent for he put the ball direct to McCafferty only to see the latter muff the chance badly.

During the final five minutes Luton did better and indeed they almost brought off a victory in the last minute, Brown taking deliberate aim about 30 yards from goal put in a terrific drive which beat Newbigging all the way but the ball just passed over the extreme corner of the goal much to the relief of the crowd.

It was a Monday match pure and simple and a draw was a fitting result for neither team really deserved to win. Undoubtedly, Reading had the greater share of attack but the necessary dash near goal was altogether lacking. Blackett and McCurdy were the chief saviours of Luton and left little for Platt to do. The half-back line did not play in that brilliant form as the previous Saturday, but the changes were naturally responsible. Still Gallacher and H. Lane did well under the circumstances, the latter especially when it is taken into consideration he had to face a star performer like Bainbridge.

As mentioned above the Luton attack did not hold the ball so much as Reading but were often dangerous, nevertheless, the left wing being the cleverer, but Latheron especially in the first half played an effective game, although out of his proper position at outside right. By the gain of this point Luton will occupy a higher position in the Southern League than they have previously obtained since their return to the competition and are to be heartily congratulated upon their season's work.