

Southern League.

LUTON v. SWINDON.

Played at Swindon on Saturday. Result:—

Swindon 4 goals.

Luton nil.

The teams were as under:—

Luton—Platt; Jackson and McCurdy; F. Hawkes, White, and R. Hawkes; Schofield, Warner, Brown, Gittins, and Barnes.

Swindon—Ling; Gill and Atterbury; Beaumont, Bannister, and Tout; Birtles, Kidd, Coates, Wardrope, and Murphy.

Referee, Mr. J. T. Ibbotson (Derby).

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It will be noticed that Luton went back to something like their old formation, although it was Gittins' first appearance at inside-left in the Southern League team. But as this identical line of forwards proved so successful at New Brompton, it was hoped a return to last season's form would come about by keeping them together. Unfortunately, this proved far from the case, and Luton suffered their worst defeat on comparative form of the present season.

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On the Swindon side, the principal changes have been made forward, for although Bannister was not with them last season, he is an old familiar face in their ranks, and has only returned after a short absence at Reading. Their front rank as constituted on Saturday is entirely new, although Coates is a local player introduced at the last moment through the absence of Lean and Smith, both of whom are on the injured list. With the exception of Wardrope, all have their reputation to make, and they displayed a welcome (from a Swindon point of view) amount of fire and dash in all their movements. Naturally, Wardrope acted as captain of the line, and put in some nice touches of the orthodox style, but he combined well with his more youthful comrades, giving them many openings to get away.

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It was one of these which sent Coates through when he opened the score after some twenty minutes' play. Just before this, however, the Swindon centre should have found the net when, during an attack on his charge, Platt was compelled to come out, but Peter picked up and threw away in the coolest manner possible.

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Up to the point of this goal being netted most chances had fallen to Luton, but the finishing touch was lacking, and Ling was not seriously troubled. Once it appeared a certain goal, for Schofield gave Warner a grand pass, and the latter easily beating Atterbury for pace, got right through with only Ling to stop the shot, but the aim was wide of the mark, and the Swindon goalkeeper did not even have the chance to distinguish himself by making an attempt to prevent the ball passing through.

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Certainly the best attempt in the first quarter of an hour was a place kick from Bob Hawkes, almost from the touch-line about thirty yards down the field, but Ling managed to hold the ball just under the crossbar, and as no one was near enough to bundle him through, the ball was got out of danger. Although the home side were a goal up, the spectators did not feel at all safe, for the home backs made many mistakes, and these should have been improved upon. Twice did Schofield get the better of Atterbury, only to put the ball over the goal-line at the finish with no one but Ling to prevent a dash right into the goal.

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But probably the incident which left the biggest mark on the result was the fact that the referee failed to award Luton a penalty when Barnes was held back by Ling following a sharp attack from Luton's right wing. At the moment, Ling was several yards away from his goal, and it would have been a simple matter to touch through. An equalising goal at this stage might have made all the difference, but it was not a lucky day for Luton at all.

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As an instance, a bad mistake on the part of Atterbury once more let in Schofield, and the whole Luton attack swarmed into the Swindon penalty area, but could not get a shot home, although several went pretty close. At last one of the Swindon defenders managed to lift the ball over the heads of the majority of the players, and before the Luton halves could get back, Kidd had got away with the ball clean on his own. Platt made a dash out, but it was no use, and his goal was pierced for the second time, Birtles running up and doing the trick.

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The very fact that Luton were the attacking party assisted in the scoring of this point, for otherwise the Swindon winger would never have got away so easily. It was purely a lucky kick away, which culminated in Birtles scoring, for undoubtedly the only intention was to relieve the pressure, and it was simply an accident that the ball came out to a Swindon player.

Just before the interval on two occasions Luton made promising attacks upon the Swindon goal, but it ended in the promise only, F. Hawkes kicking over when Ling saved a shot from Barnes, while Schofield, after taking the ball right through, simply banged it in the side of the net from close range.

From the manner in which Luton started after change of ends there appeared even yet a possible chance of winning the match, especially when Bannister left the field through getting winded during a sharp attack on the Swindon goal. But the one-back tactics adopted by the home defence quite non-plussed Luton's front string. Instead of making individual runs right into the goal-mouth, the Luton wing men continually centred the ball to Brown, who was nearly always offside owing to Atterbury having gone centre-half, in Bannister's place.

Brown himself did not appear to tumble to the situation, but contented himself with protesting to the referee. The crowd laughed loudly when Luton's centre made a dash for the ball well inside his own half, although he was absolutely clear of everyone but Ling and consequently yards offside. Several times at least three Luton forwards could easily have got to the ball before Gill, who was playing back by himself, could have reached it, but realising they were offside, had simply to wait until the Swindon player had coolly walked up to the ball and kicked almost into the Luton goal-mouth.

As Luton apparently could not turn their opportunities to advantage, the game veered round in favour of the home players, and a third goal from Murphy, who netted with a clever cross shot, quite settled the result. The ball appeared to touch Jackson as it came across, but not sufficient to turn it out of its course. Naturally such a strong lead had its effect upon both sets of players, and it was now only a question as to whether Luton would keep the score down or their defence would collapse altogether, for it was seldom the visiting forwards made any attempt at combined play. One or two shots were certainly made at the Swindon goal, and one from R. Hawkes missed by inches only, but these efforts were not sustained, and the play raged round the Luton goal-mouth.

The fourth and final goal of the match came about as the result of a well-placed corner kick by Murphy. As the ball came across, Platt made the usual dash out to get first pop, but he did not succeed in clearing, and before he could recover, Birtles had sent in a shot at the opposite corner of the goal. Platt tried his best to save, for although it was really out of his control, he managed to touch the ball at least twice before it dropped through the goal.

Although by the score it would appear Luton's defence broke down badly, this was not the case at all, and no member of that department could be put down as a failure. The Swindon forwards were fairly fast as a line, but they never really got the upper hand to the extent indicated by the score. But it was among the Luton forwards where a decided weakness manifested itself. During the game, up to the scoring of Swindon's third goal, the home defence did not compare at all favourably with Luton's, and more than double the number of openings were given to the Luton attack than fell to their more successful rivals. In the first half, Atterbury's mistakes alone should have resulted in at least four goals, but neither Schofield nor Warner had on their shooting boots, while, as previously mentioned, Brown was more often

than not standing offside when the ball came
his way.

The gate money on Monday amounted to £26 9s. 9d., and the tickets passing through represented another £21. With the £11 collected at the Tottenham match, and the money yet to come in, it is anticipated that White and Hawkes will receive about £40 each. From the report of the F.A. meeting the other day, it appeared as though the Club had guaranteed £50 each, but this was a mistake, no such undertaking having been given.