

Southern League.

BRISTOL ROVERS v. LUTON.

Played at Stapleton-road, Bristol, on Saturday.
Result :—

Luton 1 goal.

Bristol Rovers..... nil.

The teams were as under :—

Luton—Platt; Hogg and McCurdy; F. Hawkes, Jones, and R. Hawkes; Schofield, Macdonald, Brown, Fitzpatrick, and Barnes.

Bristol Rovers—Cartlidge; Hales and Appleby; Hutchinson, Owens, and Jarvie; Savage, Young, Clark, Walker, and Gould.

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

Saturday was Luton's seventh journey to Bristol to play the Rovers, and never previously had they had the satisfaction of bringing back a Southern League point. Indeed, Bristol had been drawn quite blank in this particular, for the only time Bristol City were met in this competition away West, they beat us by a goal after one of the finest exhibitions of goalkeeping by Roger Ord ever seen in Bristol or elsewhere.

The changes in the team, as announced in last week's notes, had been well discussed during the week, the opinions expressed being quite delightfully contrary and pronounced, but as the result turned out so satisfactorily, the directors can look upon their work with some satisfaction at least. Just at the last minute a further change was made, and Warner was unceremoniously dropped through getting in the black books. Schofield therefore resumed his place on the outside-right, Macdonald coming back in the team after his unfortunate series of injuries.

Last season, when Luton were doing so well, they were renowned for their "early burst," and this faculty was once more the means of adding a couple of points to the Southern League ledger. The game was scarcely more than sixty seconds old before it was actually won, although of course this was not recognised at that early stage of the proceedings. The luck of the toss went to the Rovers, but straight away from the kick-off Luton got down towards Cartlidge, and, though they were repulsed for the moment, because of Barnes getting offside, this did not altogether relieve the situation, Brown eventually securing the ball following the free kick and cleverly putting it well out on the wing to Schofield.

Joe ran the ball down a bit before passing to Macdonald, but the latter being hampered could not get through, and it went back to F. Hawkes, who punted nicely up right in the goal-mouth. Fitzpatrick and Brown were both quickly on the spot, and it was a question as to who should take the shot, but Fitz wisely left it to Sandy, and Cartlidge could not prevent his shot finding the net. It was a well-executed movement from the very start when Brown secured the ball, and it was no more than his just deserts that it should go down to his credit account on the table of scorers.

This early success was taken quietly by the crowd, who, however, were soon cheering on account of the possibility of an equaliser from a fine shot by Young, which Platt neatly turned over the bar. It was a fine attempt on the part of Young and a brilliant save by Platt. The resulting corner was well placed, and Young again tried to beat Platt with a good attempt, but Peter, although troubled by a gathered toe, proved he had quickly recovered from his hesitation of the previous week and brought off still another fine save.

At the opposite end a promising opening was spoilt through Fitzpatrick being fouled, apparently to the satisfaction of the crowd, for they chuckled audibly. Bob Hawkes was penalised for a throw-in, much to his surprise, and from the place kick the Rovers became decidedly dangerous, until Hogg headed away from the goal-mouth. The Rovers' attack were showing fine dash at this early stage, Clark and Walker both getting clean by the backs on one occasion, but Platt dashed into them with good judgment and with a huge kick sent the ball flying up the field. It was a daring save, but success justified the action.

Bob got in one of his long attempts at the opposite end almost immediately, but though Cartlidge was beaten to the world, the ball just failed to find its way between the uprights, and passed over the line about a yard wide of the extreme post. Still the play never remained for any length of time near one goal, and Savage dropped across a nice centre, which Young made an awful mess of by putting yards over, amid loud shouts of "Oh!" from the spectators. When the Luton forwards did get a chance they were certainly more on the mark than their opponents, and Macdonald had really hard luck in not getting the ball through with a cross drive which missed by inches only, Cartlidge being quite unable to get to it.

During a spell of pressure at the Luton end the ball bounced up and hit Bob Hawkes on the arm while standing inside the penalty area. The crowd, as was the case two years ago, set up a loud appeal for a penalty, and although the referee paid no heed, they kept up the shouting for several moments. Happily, however, on this occasion Mr. Muir was not to be bluffed in the same way as the referee was in the previous match, and nothing came of all the shouting. It was purely accidental, but by this time the spectators were getting rather anxious as to the result, as Luton were quite holding their own and half-time was fast approaching.

An individual effort by Brown fully deserved to score, for Sandy was harassed by several players while working his way through with the ball, but he stuck to his task, and finally let drive at Cartlidge with terrific force. Cartlidge just managed to prevent the ball going into the net, but could not hold it, and when he kicked away it was only to Macdonald's feet. It looked odds on a second goal, for Mac was well placed, but his aim was far from true, and the shot passed yards away from goal. Thus a fine chance to make matters comparatively safe was lost. Nothing of moment happened up to the interval, and Luton just about had their deserts by crossing over with a goal to their credit.

The second half opened very much like the first had done, Luton being the attacking party, but this time not meeting with success. Fitzpatrick almost netted a pass from Barnes, the ball unluckily striking Owens, who knew nothing about it otherwise. One of the nearest approaches the Rovers had to equalising was the result of a fine attempt from Clark, for Platt was right away from the ball as it neared the goal, but McCurdy had fallen back and saved on the line in similar fashion to Bushell last week for Norwich City.

A really promising opening for Luton resulted in Barnes being fouled just on the border of the penalty area, and Jones took the kick, but his effort, although well intended, was the merest trifle wide, and only a goal kick resulted. At the opposite end a similar award met with a like fate, although so anxious were the Lutonians to keep out the goal that the referee stepped the orthodox six yards out before they would retire the proper distance. Schofield put in about the most likely-looking customer for some minutes, but Cartlidge saved finely near the post.

Jones let in Walker rather badly on one occasion, and he tested Platt with a fine shot, which, however, Luton's goalkeeper just succeeded in touching, and McCurdy arriving on the scene in time, managed to kick away. This was probably the luckiest incident from a Luton point of view during the entire game, for the Rovers were now playing desperately, and only needed a goal to give them confidence. Several times it looked as if a goal must come, but the final attempts were usually wild in the extreme, the ball being ballooned several times when the forwards were well placed. Bob Hawkes saved a certain goal by completely smothering Savage when the latter appeared clear through. It was a herculean effort on the part of Bob to reach the spot, but he just did it, although both he and Savage rolled over in the excitement.

As time approached, those of the spectators who remained became very noisy, and whenever the ball was anywhere near the Luton goal set up appeals for a penalty, while every time it went out of play the referee was shouted at to "take the time off." The efforts of players and spectators were alike unsuccessful, however, and time came without any alteration in the score.

Recently, whenever the result has gone against Luton, there has been some decidedly weak spot and not always in the same position, but on Saturday the team as a whole maintained a level front, and for once each line did its full part. In goal, Platt kept out some good attempts, but the frequency with which the Rovers' front men skied the ball was a great feature of the game. Hogg was probably the most improved player, and together with McCurdy played the defensive game during the final half-hour in proper style. The Rovers' forwards this season are, I should say, the lightest quintette in the League, and they could simply make no headway when they came up to Luton's sturdy pair of backs.

All three halves also did well, and although R. Hawkes took the eye of the local critics most, it was chiefly because he made himself useful in attack by trying to get the ball by Cartlidge several times, while his colleagues usually parted with it to a forward. Jones had an easy task with Clark, who, judging from Saturday's display, is not a centre-forward—a fact certain of the Rovers' officials were impressing upon other members of their board after the match to some tune. Evidently there had been a sharp division of opinion about the advisability of playing their last year's outside-right in the centre for this match.

So far as the forwards were concerned, the five played well together without any particular one being over-prominent. Brown managed to keep onside more than in some recent matches and played the unselfish game right through the match. Schofield, as usual, was probably the more often seen of the front line on account of his speed in making tracks towards the goal-line. But near time he fell back a lot to help the defence, and consequently the play was kept nearer the Luton goal far too much to be certain of maintaining the lead.

Fitzpatrick was able several times to force the play by sheer strength, and supplies in this particular at least a much-needed help to the attacking division. He certainly gives promise of being a useful forward, and with more experience of his comrades' style should make a strong bid for a permanent place in the team. Macdonald did very well on his first real trial in his old position, while Barnes appears to be getting back to something like his last season's form.