

FOOTBALL NOTES AND NEWS.

By "Grasshopper."

SOUTHERN LEAGUE.

LUTON v. NEW BROMPTON.

POOR DISPLAY BY THE "BLUES."

In their Southern League match with New Brompton on the Ivy-road ground on Saturday afternoon, Luton gave a wretched display—the very worst, one has no hesitation in saying, they have given this season. To have to witness such a mediocre performance was more than only humiliating. It would not have mattered so much if the home side had played anything like a game, but this was distinctly what they did not do. Often it is disappointing to see the best team beaten—especially if that happens to be the home team; but there is some consolation from the fact that one is able to witness football. How many of the four thousand who visited the Luton ground can say they saw a football match on Saturday

Luton appeared to go all to pieces, metaphorically speaking, of course; for right from the start they never had the semblance of a team that was going to play the game, much less the prospect of securing victory. Some times we have the case of a team trying its utmost, and having luck dead against them; but such was not the case with the Blues on Saturday, as they could not be said to have been a team of "triers." The simple fact is that on Saturday Luton was but a three-man team; that is to say, three of the men were doing their best while the rest were nowhere.

Brown was the most conspicuous man in the front rank, though one was not quite satisfied with his failing to score on the occasion when the visiting custodian fumbled the ball almost underneath the bar. Still it was Sandy that was practically doing all the work amongst the forwards; but his two partners were useless. Gittins' chief offence was that he always hung on to the ball too long, and Fitzpatrick was not much better. To the ordinary spectator, who may not know all the ins and outs of football, the play of some of the forwards partook a little of a selfish character. Brown, who had hard luck on two occasions, had really no one to second his efforts, excepting it was Billy Barnes. The left wing man was certainly the only other forward who put some life into his play. Latheron is all right for centring, but though he is a real good trier right through to the end, he is not quite good enough for the first team; and many were wondering, now that his suspension has lapsed, why Warner was not included. Are the finances in such a happy state that the club can afford to pay a first-class man his wages without playing him in the first team?

And as to the other players, one can say but very little, except to mention Fred Hawkes at half-back. The local man stood out prominently in the defence, because of his strenuous play. Jones appeared practically useless—that may be a very strong way of putting it, but it is nevertheless true. Knowing full well what Jones is capable of doing if he will only play the game, it was all the more disappointing to see him give such a display. It was not a matter of "playing to the gallery," as the term goes—he neither played to the "gallery" or anything else. The unanimous verdict was that Jones cannot continue to supersede White on such form. Bob Hawkes, who was filling a vacancy in the Amateurs v. Professional match at Sheffield on Monday, was excused, his place being taken by Gallacher. The reserve man was, however, of little assistance, and early in the second moiety had to retire with an injured knee. With a weak half-line, it was not to be wondered at that the backs had more than they could manage. That old player, Steve Smith, fairly ran Hogg off his feet. Platt ought surely to have saved the second goal, as from the corner kick he might easily have come out and cleared, instead of giving Cunliffe such an easy chance to score.

It was not because of their particularly good play that New Brompton went home with two points. But they played with some dash, and in addition to that they played to win. With a strong wind in their favour in the first half, Luton should have done better; but on the other hand, the visitors "made hay while the sun shone," and from a fine centre from Smith, Cunliffe easily beat Platt. By notching another point in the second moiety, he placed the result beyond all doubt. Last season, at Luton, the Blues won by 2 goals to one from their Saturday's opponents; and away they made a draw of one goal each.

The teams were:—

Luton: Platt; Hogg and McCurdy; F. Hawkes, Jones, and Gallacher; Latheron, Gittins, Brown, Fitzpatrick, and Barnes.

New Brompton: Martin; Harvey and Floyd; Lloyd, Mavin, and Morgan; Warrington, Cunliffe, Lee, Marriott, and Smith.

McCurdy, who captained the team, won the toss, and took the advantage of a strong breeze. The visitors were the first to set the pace, and Platt was quickly tested, bringing off rather a lucky save. Luton attacked on the left wing, Barnes making good ground. He centred well, but Martin cleared. Play was kept for a considerable time in midfield, the game being well and evenly contested. A corner to Luton looked dangerous, but it was eventually cleared. Gittins centred from the right, and Barnes promptly placed the ball in the net, but was given offside. Luton kept up the attack, and Floyd distinguished himself by his sterling defence. Latheron, at outside right, had a fine opportunity, but sent high over the bar. The defence of the visitors kept the forwards well in check, and though under pressure, Martin was not seriously troubled. At last New Brompton raised the siege, and rushed towards goal. Smith centred from the left, and Cunliffe headed just outside the post. This was a near thing, but shortly after, Smith again centred, and Cunliffe headed a grand goal. New Brompton attacked again, and Cunliffe hit the post. Shortly after half-time was called with New Brompton leading by a goal.

Having re-started, the visitors were pressed back, and Luton were given a corner. Barnes placed the wall well, but it was headed over the bar by Fitzpatrick. Another corner gave New Brompton the opportunity of racing away to the other end, where Warrington, on the right, sent a shot wide of the post. The attack was well maintained, and Platt distinguished himself with some capital work in goal, saving two fine efforts in splendid style. After this the home team attempted to retrieve their fortunes, but could not infuse much determination into their play, so that the visitors' defence kept them well in hand. Before long New Brompton worked down again, and Luton gained time by granting a corner. From this Cunliffe scored a second goal. From this time Luton were playing with ten men, Gallacher being off the field through an accident. They had a grand chance when they had a free kick close in, three of them carried the ball almost under the crossbar, and yet the visitors' defence was able to save the situation. Their luck was dead against them, and they could do nothing right, with the result that the game ended with New Brompton easy winners.

Result: New Brompton, 2 goals; Luton, 0.