

Southern League.

LUTON v. NEW BROMPTON.

Played at Luton on Saturday. Result:—

New Brompton	2 goals.
Luton	nil.

The teams were as follow:—

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.

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

I have heard it said—more than once I believe—that it is unsafe to count one's chickens before they are hatched, and the truth of it has been very keenly recognised by the supporters of the Luton Club. On Saturday, the local team had what was regarded as one of their softest jobs on hand, and I have not the slightest doubt that in many quarters the two points had been added to Luton's total long before the game was played.

And certainly points had never seemed to be safer than in this case. Football, like cricket, is a proverbially uncertain game, but seeing that New Brompton had been beaten in three successive matches at home and that they were three points below Luton on the League table, it was scarcely to be expected that they would wrest the spoils of victory from Luton. But they never evinced anything like a yielding disposition, and eventually left the field with a very good victory to their credit.

The weather was ideal for football, except perhaps that the breezes were a little troublesome, but though the sun shone brilliantly there was a very poor attendance. New Brompton never have drawn a big crowd at Luton, and last season their visit provided one of the poorest gates of the season, and history is likely to repeat itself in this respect, unless Luton should give many more exhibitions like that of Saturday. What the gates would come to then, goodness only knows.

Although no one could grudge Bob Hawkes his well-earned rest, his absence was regretted by many before the game commenced, and it was regretted still more after the play had been in progress a little time. Probably the fact of his standing down made all the difference between winning and losing, for it is many a long day since Luton spectators saw a pocerer show at half-back than they beheld on this occasion.

McCurdy, who skippered the team, won the toss, and decided to kick towards the town end, but the wind proved to be of little advantage. The visitors were the first to become dangerous, a bad kick by Hogg letting in the forwards, and Platt was only just in the nick of time when running out to clear, while directly afterwards McCurdy headed away from another attempt. Luton then changed the scene of operations, a smart run by Barnes taking the ball to the other end, but his centre was easily got rid of by Martin.

Luton returning to the attack, Barnes put in a fine shot which was safely negotiated by the custodian, and a corner which followed soon afterwards was not improved upon. Then the home forwards were responsible for a really fine effort, Gittins putting the ball forward and Barnes netting it with an excellent shot. It was somewhat hard lines to have the goal disallowed for offside, though at the same time there could be no doubt that the referee's decision was perfectly correct.

Latheron next had a grand chance, but sent high and wide, whilst another corner also proved fruitless. Brown, however, really had very hard luck in heading just over the bar from a centre by Barnes, but Martin had little difficulty in disposing of a shot from Jones. Gittins was making a decidedly promising run when he was badly brough down by Floyd, and the free kick was cleared.

Although Luton had been doing the greater share of the aggressive work, the forwards did not shape like goal-getters, and when tackled by the opposing backs they could seldom rely upon any support from their halves. The New Brompton defence was vigorous, and the backs played with all the greater confidence when they discovered the weakness of the attack.

Eventually, the visitors turned the tables on the home team, and met with success almost at the first time of asking. Smith, operating at outside-left, took the ball down, and putting nicely across the goal, Cunliffe scored with a splendid shot. Greatly elated, the Bromptonians were soon renewing their overtures, and after Platt had saved a grand shot from Lee, Smith and Cunliffe repeated their tactics, it being a bit of luck for Luton that the result was not the same, for Cunliffe's shot struck the post.

The home team replied, and Fitzpatrick putting well to the front, Brown cleverly misled his adversaries by jumping over the ball and letting it pass. Had Gittins or Latheron been up they would have had the goal at their mercy, but unfortunately they were not in attendance and the opportunity was lost. Luton again acted on the offensive before the interval, but could do nothing better than force a corner, and had to change ends a goal in arrears.

Smith made the running for the visitors early in the second half, but the assault was repulsed, and Luton had two more corners, both placed by Barnes, and from one of them Fitzpatrick headed just over the bar. New

Brompton; their success was wholly and solely due to the fact that the men employed direct methods and put plenty of energy and determination into their work. The Luton forwards never really got together, and their display savoured rather of exhibition football than the League kind.

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Fitzpatrick was quite unlike the inside-left of a few weeks since, and Gittins, though clever enough, was entirely lacking in dash. But the greatest weakness was at half-back, where Gallacher, when he was on the field, proved quite a failure, and Jones played his worst game this season, so far as I have seen him. It is all very well to turn and twist about when necessary, but to do it when not called for is simply to waste time and allow opponents to get back into position. Jones is an excellent player at his best, but he'll soon find White displacing him on Saturday's form. Fred Hawkes worked well, but he could not atone for the shortcomings of the others.

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Hogg and McCurdy played strongly, and Platt was not in the least to blame for either of the goals. Of the visitors, Smith and Cunliffe were the leading lights in the forward line, the halves were a fairly serviceable trio, and Floyd and Harvey both did capital work at back. Martin was not severely tested in goal, but he did what was asked of him in a workmanlike way.

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