

FOOTBALL NOTES AND NEWS.

By "Grasshopper."

SOUTHERN LEAGUE.

LUTON v. SWINDON.

There was a sensational finish to this match on the Ivy-road enclosure on Saturday afternoon when Luton romped home victorious to the tune of six goals to two. The sensation was provided at the end, when during the last eight minutes of the game, the Blues put on four goals, after play had been fairly even. Indeed the front line entirely surpassed itself, and no doubt surprised itself as well, as it certainly did the spectators.

Owing to the heavy rain of the morning the ground was literally covered with sheets of water, and before the game had been long in progress the field was a perfect quagmire. This state of things of course rendered anything like accurate play out of the question, and it is scarcely too much to say that a few would not have been surprised if the game had not been proceeded with at all. However, the sun came out, the weather was mild, and therefore there was no other reason for postponing the fixture.

There was but a very poor gate, the spectators scarcely numbering three thousand. But Swindon are never a big draw at Luton, and the inclement weather also had an effect on the attendance. Still, with the state of trade as it is, one must not look forward for big crowds until about Easter.

Brown set the ball in motion on a sodden turf, and in five minutes Swindon obtained the lead through Smith. This was hard luck on Platt, who had been doing some clean work. There was little to choose in the sides, but towards the end of the first moiety, Gittins brought the scores level. It was about time, many thought, for the inside right man to justify his inclusion in the team. In the second half Luton were the first to obtain the lead. The next point of interest was when Platt dropped the ball when he received it from Birtles. Smith rushed up, and of course had no difficulty in scoring, but it was a goal literally given to the visitors. Towards the finish the goals came fast for Luton. It seemed that every time the home forwards got away one or other of them notched a point. The Shunter's defence completely collapsed, and Hemmings, the custodian, had a most anxious time of it for ten minutes. Luton certainly deserved to win, but not by such a big margin.

Contrary to Dame Rumour, Luton practically played the team that did duty on both occasions in the cup fight with Sunderland. The captain, R. M. Hawkes, was allowed to stand down, Jones filling the vacancy. Swindon are largely a new team this year, as will be seen from their list of players: Hemmings; Gill, Lean; Tout, Bannister, Beaumont; Birtles, Kidd, Smith, Wardrope, Murphy.

Having kicked off, the Blues were the first to attack. Both sides took up the running in turn after this, and Platt made a fine save from Kidd, but was beaten by Smith. Luton pressed strongly for the next few minutes, but Swindon broke away through Murphy, whose centre was missed by Birtles. Another attack by Luton followed, and Bannister was lucky in charging down a hot shot. This did not dislodge the home forwards, who played with great dash. A foul by Tout, who brought Barnes down inside the area, earned Luton a penalty kick, but Hemmings saved amid great excitement.

A prettily combined run took Swindon to the other end, but McCurdy checked them. They came again, however, and Wardrope tested Platt, who cleverly saved. Even play was the order for a time, the ground, already badly cut up, taking a lot out of the players. A rally by Luton almost brought the equaliser, Fred Hawkes missing by inches with a red-hot drive. In a sustained attack on the Swindon goal Gittins was a prominent figure, and from one of his passes Barnes got through, but failed to beat Hemmings. Hemmings' work in the Swindon goal was particularly good, and he followed up his earlier efforts by saving a seeming certainty from the foot of F. Hawkes. A corner to Luton brought them nothing, but shortly after this Gill miskicked and let Murphy in. The latter shot hard against the post, with nothing but the goalkeeper to beat. Still keeping up the attack, Luton seemed certain to equalise, and this was at length accomplished by Gittins, who finished a splendid piece of work with a shot which gave Hemmings no chance. There was no further scoring, a keenly contested half coming to an end with the score at 1 goal each.

The second half saw a great change come over the game, and the Luton men played up in a fashion that first surprised and finally quite disconcerted their opponents. For the first few minutes Swindon pressed, going away with a fine dash from the kick-off, and reaching the Luton goal, where Platt saved a shot from Kidd. Luton at once responded, Barnes making a good run on the left wing and giving a good opening to Gittins, who shot well, but without success. Play ruled even for a bit, the ball going from end to end, till F. Hawkes made a splendid run all on his own, the ball coming eventually to Fitzpatrick, who put his side a goal ahead.

Luton kept up the pressure, and Hemmings, in the Swindon goal, made a good save from Fitzpatrick. Gittins was badly fouled just outside the penalty area, but the free kick led to no score. Hemmings made two splendid saves at close quarters, and luck seconded his efforts, more than one good shot by the Luton men rebounding luckily off an opponent. The combination of the home side was excellent, and they never gave the Swindon defenders a moment's rest, Barnes and Gittins being specially prominent for smart work in the forward line. In spite of all this pressing, Swindon, from a sudden breakaway, equalised in a most lucky manner. Birtles put in a long shot, which Platt only partially cleared, and Smith rushed the ball easily into the net. It was a most simple goal.

Play was fairly even for some time afterwards, although Swindon's Murphy very nearly converted a centre by Britles. Towards the close Luton came again, and, after Jones had put his side ahead, the Swindon defence absolutely broke down, Gittins, Murphy, and Brown all scoring in the last stage of the game.

Result : Luton. . . . six goals
 Swindon two goals.