

Football Notes and News.

By "Grasshopper."

SOUTHERN LEAGUE.

LUTON LOSE BADLY AT SWINDON

WAS THE GOALKEEPER "SOLD"?

On Saturday afternoon, at Swindon, in the Southern League, Luton met with a severe defeat, receiving the worst beating they have had this season. Of course, in all their history, the Strawplaiters have never been able to beat Swindon on the latter's ground, and last year, playing away, they beat us 4-0. However, at home, the Blues retrieved the disaster by beating their visitors 6-2. This season the "Shunters" repeated last season's dose, and on Saturday they not only made the proverbial "rings" round Luton, but won handsomely by four goals to love! Considering all things, it was truly an inexplicable defeat. Seeing that Hogg came back into the team, naturally one expected that the defence would be fairly sound; "Bob," White and Jones were also at half-back, so that however weak the attacking line might be, the defence ought to have been sound. And with the cool, collected Jarvis in goal, presumably Luton went to Swindon with high hopes of bringing a point home with them.

The Blues' defence, however, practically collapsed from the start. The two backs were not only weak, but sometimes erratic. "Bob," it is true, did his best, but White and Jones did not show that bustling play of theirs against the Swindon forwards. It may be that Hogg had not completely recovered—if that were so it was a great pity he was played; McCurdy, too, appeared at times to lose his head, with the result that Jarvis was beaten time and again, despite the fact that occasionally he was brilliant in goal.

The weakness of the defence was so palpable, that one bestowed but little attention on the spasmodic efforts of the forwards. Hall was again played at centre, with the same result as before—that he was not a success, and slow though he be, "Sandy" might easily have done better. Moody and Walders, on the left wing, showed improved combination, but the right wing, composed of Rigate and F. Hawkes, was the more aggressive of the two.

A defeat of four goals to love requires some explaining away, and we have not been wanting for "explanations." One of these is not at all pleasant reading. Since Saturday's match one has frequently heard the question asked, "Was Jarvis sold?" One does not like to imagine that our backs would "let down" their goalkeeper; one believes them to be more loyal to their club than to let the games go in that manner. Therefore one must put their display on Saturday down to the fact that they suffered from a temporary weakness. Unfortunately these ugly rumours will get about, and, of course, we know that incidents and "feelings" go on behind the scenes. It is true that Jarvis replaced Platt a fortnight ago, not solely because the senior custodian did not do so well in the last match. Jarvis happened to be in tip-top form, and was given a chance. So far as the goalkeepers are concerned, it is a "toss up"; there is really nothing between them, and either can be relied upon.

With regard to Saturday's match, which was witnessed by about 4,000, Luton had three goals put up against them in the first moiety; though certainly the "Shunters" had the wind in their favour. It was Luton, however, that opened the attack, and F. Hawkes, who was the "life" of the visiting forward line, soon looked dangerous. The leather was got away with difficulty, and then the home forwards went away with a rush, Fenton putting in a capital centre, and afterwards giving Jarvis a hard shot, which the "Blues'" goalkeeper smartly saved.

It was next the turn of the home right-wing to lead the attack, and after Ling had handled a long shot from Walders, Kidd made a fine run, and got the better of the Luton backs, winding up with a very hot shot to Jarvis, who had two tries before he made the necessary clearance. The Luton goalkeeper was at fault with a shot from Warburton, letting the ball go through his hands into the net, and Swindon were a goal ahead. From this point to the interval the railway men never looked back. Rushton twice nearly scored, missing a fair opening the first time and trying to make amends at the second attempt by narrowly failing to push Jarvis over the line. Luton made an occasional effort, and R. Hawkes tried a good shot from long range, but before the interval Kidd and Rushton added further goals, and the sides crossed over with Swindon leading by 3 goals to 0.

Though they played against a stiff wind in the second half, Swindon seemed to have the upper hand. The fact was, the Luton forwards did not take advantage of their opportunities, and did not follow up their chances sufficiently to benefit thereby. Fortunately for Jarvis, the shooting of the home side lacked accuracy. At length, Luton were awarded a penalty, and Jones took the shot, but the custodian easily saved. The visitors' luck was indeed dead out. Shortly after this, Swindon were given a penalty, and peculiar to relate, Fleming, who took the shot, failed to get the ball by Jarvis.

However, Fleming atoned for his mistake later on by scoring Swindon's fourth goal. Towards the finish—when it was too late—Luton showed considerable improvement, and though they had a big score against them, gave the home defence a very busy time. Rigate and Fred Hawkes were often dangerous, and the efforts of Moody were not to be despised, but the Swindon backs, aided by a bit of luck, succeeded in keeping their goal intact.

Result: Swindon, 4 goals; Luton, 0.