

Football Notes and News.

By "Grasshopper."

SOUTHERN LEAGUE.

LUTON'S POOR SHOW AGAINST BRISTOL.

It is to be regretted that Luton Town are just now having a very bad time of it; but one cannot help thinking that it is not altogether a matter of hard luck, or even of luck being dead against them. There is a consensus of opinion that the team, taken as a whole, is not good enough to maintain our reputation, and that all along enthusiasts have been living in a fools' paradise. Most teams have their ups and downs, and because Luton are just now hit very hard indeed is no reason why too severe criticisms should be passed on the players. It is not a question of individual players—the team as a whole has been little better than a failure this season, and until there is a re-arrangement there does not seem to be much chance of Luton Town improving their prospects.

It had been asserted that ours was what is known as a "heavy ground" team. Surely the turf was heavy enough on Saturday! The Rovers kicked off against an almost perfect blizzard. However, quite early in the game Bristol broke away and scored, when Platt had a good chance at clearing. The home forwards practically threw the game away. Pearson had several open chances, but he was not much worse than the others—the shooting of the whole quintette was disappointing. The halves, too, were weak, with the result that the two backs had a lot of work to do. It is all very well to talk about Hogg and McCurdy, but with such a feeble attacking line and weak halves, the backs are given little breathing space. In the second half, it is true, Luton had more of the game than the Rovers had in the first moiety. But it is goals that count, and these were what Luton could not get. The Rovers were certainly the better team and no impartial spectator begrudged their win of 2 goals to nil. In consequence of Portsmouth beating Millwall, Luton have once more been relegated to the bottom of the League.

The following were the teams:—

Bristol Rovers: Cartlidge; Appleby, Boyle; Smart, Strang, Handley; Clark, Turner, Smith, Roberts and Buckle.

Luton Town: Platt; Hogg, McCurdy; Jones, White, F. Hawkes; Rigate, Hall, Pearson, Moody and Rankin.

It will be seen that F. Hawkes was shifted back from the forward line to his usual place at right half, while Hall was fetched into the forward string.

McCurdy, who in the absence of R. M. Hawkes captained the team, won the toss. Immediately Luton forced a corner. This was cleared, but later Luton were awarded a free kick, from which Pearson had a grand chance to score with the goal gaping five yards away from him, but he missed. The wind proved too strong for the wing men, Rankin and Rigate, whose centres were more often than not blown behind. So far Luton, with the wind in their favour, had done all the pressing, but now the Rovers broke away on the right wing, and a shot was put in which struck the bar, and, from the rebound, the ball was sent smartly into the net by Roberts, four minutes from the start.

After this unexpected reverse, Luton returned to the attack, and Cartlidge saved brilliantly twice from Rankin and Pearson. A free kick to Luton gave Moody the chance to run right in, but Cartlidge picked up the ball from his toe when a goal seemed certain. A corner to Luton came to nothing, and then play was kept for some time in midfield. Bristol however, could not get down against the wind, and soon Luton were pressing again. Hall forced a corner, which proved fruitless, and then Bristol swooped down upon Platt, but Turner shot wide.

From the goal kick, Luton resumed the aggressive, and Rigate broke through the defence, but Cartlidge managed to push the ball outside the goal-post. Again the Rovers broke away in dangerous fashion, but Hogg cleared. They repeated the movement, and this time Jones repelled the attack. Luton now pressed again, but the Rovers defended stoutly. A corner was forced, but the ball was well kept out. After Platt had saved from Smith, Luton combined well, and Moody sent in a shot which skimmed the bar. Half-time was called, with the Rovers leading by the odd goal.

Resuming, Luton opened the attack, Boyle clearing as Hawkes was getting dangerous. Next Rankin was fouled, but the advantage from the free-kick was easily cleared. McCurdy was injured and retired for a few minutes. Bristol had by far the best of the play with the wind, but they did not control the ball well. Platt was only occasionally tested. Once Rigate broke well away, but his shot was cleared.

The ball then went to Hogg on the half-way line, and with a long shot nearly beat Cartlidge. From a corner, Moody headed just by the post. Play travelled from end to end, Luton having more of the play than could have been expected. For a foul on the wing Buckle gave Platt a hard drive to save. Later on Smith looked like scoring when near goal, but he got stuck in the mud and barely kicked the ball. Play continued to be stubbornly contested right to the finish. Once Smith, the Bristol centre, missed an open goal through Platt and McCurdy misunderstanding each other. The visitors now pressed rather severely, and eventually Turner beat the home custodian with a fast oblique shot.

Result: Bristol Rovers 2 goals; Luton, nil.