

LUTON TOWN v. READING.

SUBSTANTIAL VICTORY AT LAST.

The 4,000 spectators who braved the bitterly cold wind on Saturday afternoon and watched Luton Town pit their strength against Reading on the Bury Park enclosure, had the satisfaction of seeing the boys in blue win two points in the Southern League without any suspicion of a fluke by a score of 3-1.

This, with the cup-tie so close at hand, gives supporters hope for the future for the Straw-hatters were good value for their two goals superiority. Several of the players were more or less crippled before they started, but this did not prevent the Town giving a decidedly good display.

Their holiday record of four points out of a possible six is good for a club that held the unenviable position of being bottom dog on the league ladder. It is significant that Luton have now played 20 games and have only scored 21 goals. Three of these, exactly one seventh, were obtained last Saturday!

The side that did duty performed well individually and collectively. The forwards showed an improvement, Rankin putting life into their movements, and now and again the combination was really worth watching. They could get near to goal in promising fashion, but once there they were less certain and occasionally they gave glimpses of that shakiness when success was within their reach which has been their great fault during the season. Fred Hawkes missed one or two openings, as he had done during the holidays, but he is developing into a very useful inside man.

Mr. D. Hammond (of Manchester) was referee, and the teams which he had charge of were constituted as follow:—

LUTON.—Platt; Hogg and McCurdy; Jones, White and R. M. Hawkes; Rigate, F. Hawkes, Rankin, Moody and Walders.

READING.—Rae; Couquet and Wilkes; Walker, Boden and Hallworth; Dougal, Minter, Beale, Bodger and Gee.

Bob Hawkes won the toss—for the second time during the week. After desultory play Rigate received from Moody and carried the ball a good distance before parting with it to Fred Hawkes, who took it on and shot when only two or three yards out, but struck the goalie. Platt had to deal with a long one from Dougal. Rae got himself in difficulties in a dash by the Luton forwards, but cleared with Walders harassing him.

Platt punched away a shot from the wing by Gee and Bob Hawkes relieved neatly. Gee tried again and induced McCurdy to give away a corner that brought the Luton goalie's fists into operation. Fred Hawkes hurt his left leg in a collision, but the referee himself attended to his injury so that he was able to continue playing, though with a limp. After a minute, however, he had to leave the field, but returned again after a little while. After Rae had kicked away a centre by Walders, Rigate sent in a soft one that the custodian had no difficulty with.

Reading attacked very dangerously, but the pressure was relieved by Minter missing the target. Luton immediately carried the ball to the other end, where Rae took the sphere from Moody and conceded a fruitless corner. Rankin sent out a pass to the left which Walders returned at once, but it could not be turned to account and the most likely move came from Moody, from whom Rae saved just as the whistle went for offside.

Reading scored twenty-five minutes from the start as the result of a foul by Hogg. Hallworth landed the free kick in just the right place, and Minter aimed at goal. Platt stopped the shot but could not get the ball away, so that Beate was able to put on the finishing touch by tapping it into the net. A few minutes later Minter missed the post by an inch or two.

Rae had some trouble with a hot shot from Rigate, which he was fortunate to save at all. Five minutes from the interval the Blues got on terms. From a corner taken by Rigate Moody headed in from a good distance out. The ball rose in the air and appeared to be dropping just inside the bar. The goalie looked as though he would have no difficulty, but the ball deceived him and passed just beneath the horizontal. A minute later a scrimmage took place in the Reading goalmouth, when the visitors' colours were kept flying purely by luck and nothing else. When the interval arrived the scores were equal.

In the first minute of the second half Rankin skied over the bar. Wilkes took a free kick which Platt put behind for a corner, and from this Peter saved finely. Then Luton worked down well and Rankin converted a good centre from Walders by heading into the net five minutes after the resumption.

Luton returned again and Rae dashed out only just in time to prevent Moody scoring. Platt saved cleverly from Beate when the visitors broke away. Rae and Fred Hawkes came into collision when the goalie had the ball and both rolled on the turf, but the custodian recovered first and cleared.

Play was becoming lively and exciting, the ball being very light and fast. Platt dealt smartly with an effort by Rodger, and a hard, long shot by Beate travelled behind. A dangerously-placed centre by Gee was touched out by Platt. Fifteen minutes after the restart Walders got through on the halfway line, raced along with the ball at his feet, and scored a magnificent goal from a difficult angle.

Moody was kicked on the face and had to leave the field nearly ten minutes from the finish. Towards the close both sides played good football and each struggled hard to pierce the other's defence. Platt was given a number of shots, but none which he found much difficulty in getting rid of. The game thus ended in a smartly-obtained win for Luton by 3-1.