

Southern League.

NEW BROMPTON v. LUTON.

Played at New Brompton on Saturday.
Result:—

Luton	1 goal.
New Brompton.....	nil.

The teams were as under:—

Luton—Platt; Hogg and McCurdy; F. Hawkes, White, and A. Jones; Rigate, Rankin, A. E. Jones, Moody, and Latheron.

New Brompton — Martin; Harvey and Floyd; Lloyd, Mavin, and Rowbotham; Barker, Hartley, McGibbon, Pickering, and Smith.

Referee, Mr. A. Shallcross (Leek).

When New Brompton visited Luton four months ago they walked off with a most undeserved couple of points, which incidentally have kept Luton in the "bottom two" ever since. Therefore Saturday's turn of the table comes with almost poetic justice, and, curiously enough, places the Kentish club in Luton's position, for the time being at any rate. There were two or three compulsory changes in the formation of the visiting side, as neither R. Hawkes nor W. Porter could arrange to travel, while Walders was on the sick list and was not available. It would have been rather a difficult matter to put out an effective forward line under the circumstances if Arthur Jones had not wired late on Friday that he was able to arrange to travel down to New Brompton, for he had not been in a position to promise definitely after the match the previous Wednesday.

New Brompton were just as anxious as Luton for Southern League points, especially as this made the seventh match since a victory had been secured. It gave their supporters much satisfaction when they learned that McGibbon would be able to turn out, and he received a special cheer when he jumped the ropes a few minutes after the remainder of the players had taken a turn at the preliminary kick-about. The only player on the home side who was unknown to Luton was Barker at outside-right, and it appears he has been one of the "unemployed" of the Club all the season, inasmuch as New Brompton do not run a reserve team—a very doubtful policy indeed, as it must tend to make players careless, knowing they will not be wanted week after week.

With the regular captain away, the duties fell upon McCurdy, and he had the satisfaction of winning the toss. Possibly this bit of good fortune was a material factor in winning the game, for the wind was pretty strong, and helped Luton to press in the first half to the extent of notching an all-important goal, and this naturally gave the players greater confidence in their ability to hold their own when fighting against the elements in the concluding half. If the game fell below that of the previous Wednesday in some particulars, it nevertheless proved fairly fast, and the result was always in doubt up to the final whistle.

Luton were first dangerous when Martin almost allowed Arthur Jones to steal a goal, and the visitors certainly had the ball oftener at the start, but time after time the forwards were pulled up for offside, Rigate and Jones being particularly penalised on this score. Although the referee was pretty busy with his whistle he did not quite see every offence according to New Brompton, and many instructions were shouted from the directors' box, while one of the linesmen was also prompt in waving his flag. Rigate made a particularly fine run, and with all three of his inside comrades up, a goal seemed well on the way, but Jones' shot, hitting Martin, rebounded into play. By the way, there would have been a lot of trouble over this if it had scored, for it was one of the occasions when the home officials were quite convinced that at least four Lutonians were yards offside, never seeing that Rigate raced by the back before he settled on the ball.

Barker made a diversion by taking a pass from McGibbon, and after tricking McCurdy, put in a long attempt, which caused Platt to come out and catch just in time, for McGibbon had made tracks for goal and was right on the spot when Peter picked up the ball. Platt, however, cleverly dodged the soldier and threw the ball away in confident style. The next occasion when New Brompton threatened danger was through the agency of Smith, who dropped the ball across the mouth of goal in quite his best style, although just a wee bit too far back, and neither of the home forwards could get to it. Still Lloyd rushed up from half-back and let drive with a tremendous kick, which would have found the net if it had been properly directed, but fortunately for Luton it only resulted in a goal kick. By this time Pickering and Smith were working nicely together, and it was from this quarter practically all the danger came right through the match, for McGibbon was, as a rule, well held by White, while the right wing pair were not quite happy together.

At the opposite end Jones all but managed to score with a hard shot just a yard or so wide after a spell of Luton pressure, but Martin was not very hard worked at this stage, and the game veered round to the other end of the field, Platt having to run out and punch away several times in order to maintain a clean sheet. Pickering was playing a clever game in quite his best manner, and hereabouts lived up to his Luton reputation by having

hard luck with a really good drive which Platt just succeeded in saving.

Rigate got across another good centre, and Jones, taking deliberate aim, sent the ball hard towards goal, but Floyd intervened and just managed to get it over the bar for a corner kick. This led up to more pressure, and two or three Lutonians had a try to force the ball by Martin without securing a real opening. Finally F. Hawkes made an individual rush, and let drive with a hard shot, which, however, only went for a goal kick, and the game settled down into midfield again. But after half-an-hour another run through by Rigate finished up with what proved the winning point. Rigate held the ball and gradually worked his way along the goal-line from the corner flag. Tackled by Floyd, he placed it almost at the feet of Arthur Jones, and naturally the home defence were expecting a shot from that player, but he could not quite reach the ball as it came swiftly across, and before anyone could realise the situation, Moody, who was a yard or so further out and facing his own goal, had cleverly hooked the ball through. Martin was quite helpless, being unprepared for a shot from that quarter.

Barker should have equalised almost immediately after, when Smith put across another of his square centres, but the New Brompton right-winger, taking a wild kick, sent the ball yards over, amid groans of disapproval from the spectators. Martin shaped none too surely at a pot shot from Abe Jones, and if Rankin had not hesitated he should have turned the home goalkeeper's slip to good account, for he was well up. Half-time came along just after this, and Luton were faced with the big task of preventing their opponents reaping the advantage of the help given by having the wind behind them.

For over ten minutes after the resumption not a single Luton player so much as touched the ball in the home half of the field, so persistent was the pressure put upon Platt and Co., but try as they would no opening could be forced, and what attempts did reach Platt were dealt with in a masterly manner, so that his comrades had full confidence in allowing the ball to come his way if they had any risk in dealing with it themselves. It was, as a matter of fact, a full quarter of an hour before Luton made anything like an attack upon their opponents' goal, and this was merely a sudden breakaway, Latheron being left with a clear field, and, racing down almost from his own half, sent in a long shot which struck the side net.

Platt probably won the match for Luton midway in the second half, when he prevented a regular pile-driver from Pickering entering the net. It was a truly magnificent save, and when Platt made his dash right across the goal it appeared as if the ball had already crossed the line, but, with outstretched hands, Luton's custodian just managed to turn the ball out. What made the save more remarkable was that the ball was travelling at a terrific pace right away from Platt as it came across the goal-mouth. Certainly no more daring save has been made this season for Luton, and it was hard lines indeed for Pickering, for his work which led up to the opening fully deserved a better fate.

Although New Brompton continued to hold the advantage, they never afterwards had as easy openings as Luton, who should have added at least two goals. Rigate got clean through in one instance, and the ball hit the bottom of the post behind Martin, who had advanced to meet the Luton forward, while Rankin also enticed the home goalkeeper out of goal, and, with an open space, could not manage to turn the chance to account. Martin was at least six yards out, lying on the ground, and he just touched the ball away at a second attempt when it appeared all up, for Rigate was also handy and the ball only needed a tap to score.

About ten minutes before the finish the referee came in for more criticism from the crowd when he would not heed the confident appeal for a penalty against Hogg for bringing McGibbon down. From the stand, McGibbon appeared to attempt to rush by Hogg, and, finding Jock rather a stiffer obstacle than he bargained for, went down, as was to be expected. The referee consulted a linesman before giving Luton the benefit of the doubt. This apparently settled New Brompton, for Luton comfortably held them at bay for the remaining minutes, Rankin being observed acting as a third back at the finish.

Luton have played much better and lost in several matches away this season, but the players are nevertheless to be congratulated for the stubborn manner in which they stood up against the elements when hard pressed. Platt, as already mentioned, played his part grandly, while Hogg and McCurdy stood by him in a manner that cannot be too highly praised. If not so brilliant a line as against Queen's Park Rangers, all the half-backs did splendid work. White gave no evidence of his recent injury, and was fully able to cope with McGibbon. Jones had his wing under control the whole time, and they were never much in the picture. F. Hawkes had undoubtedly the hardest task, and he came through his many encounters with Smith with credit. Among the forwards most danger came from Rigate in getting the ball down the field; still, Arthur Jones gave the home defence something to think about by being always bustling, and this undoubtedly allowed his wings freer scope. Besides scoring the goal, Moody gave his usual quiet but nevertheless effective display, and as a line, without being brilliant, the forwards did much better than in many games this season.

For New Brompton, Smith and Pickering stood out right above their comrades as class artists. It is wonderful how the veteran winger retains his form, while Pickering appears to be in better health than when he wore Luton colours, and naturally his play reflects the improvement. The mainstay of the home defence rests upon Harvey and Floyd, and their work told on many occasions, for they are a pair of robust backs, and the last-mentioned certainly played a much cleaner game than usual.