

Football Notes and News.

[By "GOALPOST."]

LUTON'S FIRST MATCH OF THE SEASON.

FINE PERFORMANCE AT HOME.

Luton Town opened their season on Wednesday with a splendid performance that ought to greatly encourage the players as well as inspire confidence in the supporters. Having now seen the team play in a League match, one is able to form some opinion as to the merits of the performers individually and collectively, and though it is always dangerous to play the role of prophet an opinion may reasonably be formed as to how Luton will stand at the end of the season. True, one must not place a great deal of faith in first performances, and if it is true that "a new broom always sweeps clean," the adage does not always apply to a football team; but if the Town are not well up in the Southern League next April, most people will be surprised. The opening of the season, at any rate, augurs well.

The result of the match on Wednesday, on the Ivy-road ground, when Luton defeated Norwich City by four goals to love, gives the team a splendid send-off. Naturally it is preferable to begin badly and finish well, than to commence on the upgrade, and close the season disastrously. We have had those experiences already; yet there are many who still believe in the old saying that "a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush," and it is better to take all chances as they come.

Wednesday's was rather a peculiar game in several respects. For instance, though Luton's win was so decisive, at one time the odds seemed to be leaning somewhat in favour of the visitors. Seeing that Luton had a strong wind in their favour in the first half, without finding the goal, naturally with the changed conditions, the "Canaries" had a sporting chance, especially as they gave such a good display in the first half. Then, again, real scientific play, or genuine football, as one prefers to call it, was confined almost entirely to the first 45 minutes. Indeed, the second moiety was very scraggy indeed.

Norwich's immunity from defeat in the first half was probably due entirely to the magnificent goal-keeping of Roney. Though aided by a little bit of luck once, when he came out of goal to meet the attacking forwards, yet his goal-keeping was magnificent. The home forwards appeared to be somewhat undecided, but all the same they ought to have been a couple of goals up—if it hadn't been for Roney. However, Norwich had a fair share of the game, and may also be said to have experienced the proverbial "hard lines" on at least one occasion. This was when the ball was centred by Allsopp, and went bang across the goal-mouth; how three men missed the billet was a marvel.

On changing ends the visitors opened the attack at once. Jarvis, who deputised Platt in goal, found himself in difficulties, and had to leave his charge. Meanwhile the custodian was unable to get back, and Gregory, who partnered McClurdy at back, rushing between the uprights to save a shot from one of the Norwich forwards, stopped the ball with his hand. Had the Luton back let the ball into the net, it is doubtful if the point would have stood, because the Norwich player was well off-side at the time. However, Luton were rightly penalised for the infringement before the second half was a minute old. Smith took the kick, but struck the upright, much to the relief and comfort of the five thousand spectators, and of course greatly to the chagrin of the "Canaries."

If Norwich had then scored it is probable that a different complexion would have been put on the game; because after that misfortune the visitors seemed to lose heart. Eventually Luton got away, and Bradley succeeded in scrambling the ball into the net. Then Haycock sent in an unexpected shot, which, the referee held, Roney allowed to cross the line, and the point had to stand. Neither was a brilliant goal, but it was sufficient to demoralise the visitors, and from that moment Norwich seemed to fall completely to pieces, metaphorically speaking.

In a quarter of an hour Bradley headed a magnificent goal, while a few minutes to time he scored Luton's fourth point with an excellently judged shot, which completely beat the visiting goal-keeper.

On the play Luton were by far the better side, and they deserved their victory. While one was not struck with the home forwards in the first half, in the second 45 minutes they revealed their capabilities in a remarkable manner. We have often had a quintette of "triers" — this season's lot are not only "triers" but what is infinitely better, goal getters as well. Bradley made an ideal centre-forward, and two or his goals were as cleverly got as any seen on the Ivy-road ground. If Bradley keeps up to this form, Menzies, who is still indisposed, will have to show something great to justify his replacing the West Bromwich man. Brown and Haycock made an aggressive right wing. McEwen, who is still a really fine back, was beaten time after time by the Brentford man, and there is indeed a great deal of significance in that observation. Johnson, on the other wing, also gave a good display, but it is obvious that he has not got into Moody's "ways" just yet. Bert may be left to take care of himself. Yes, Luton's forward line, on Wednesday's form—and we expect them to improve—is all that can be desired.

R. Hawkes was again in tip-top form. He played well, and was guilty of less "wandering." Strange to remark, the Captain's namesake was entirely off colour. One has scarcely ever seen Fred Hawkes make such a poor show. Jones was the Jones of old.

From a first impression the weak place in the Luton team this season is the defence. The backs are not at all satisfactory. McCurdy, it is true, showed that old sturdiness of his, but he was painfully weak at times. Gregory, too, was scarcely as reliable as he had shown himself to be in the practice matches.

But perhaps the most popular man on Luton's side on Wednesday afternoon was Jarvis. And he richly deserved all the praise he got, and more. Only the word brilliant can adequately describe the work of our junior goal keeper. The saves which he frequently brought off showed that Jarvis possesses the abilities of a custodian of the highest order. Platt, however brilliant, could not have done one whit better. Whether in the thick of it, or when he was only being tamely pressed, Jarvis's performance was just the sort of thing to raise the pride of a football crowd. Hence, no wonder Jarvis was the hero of the afternoon.