

FOOTBALL.

The Southern League.

LOST BY DOUBTFUL GOAL.

New Brompton Succeed at Home.

Only one change was made in the Luton team from that against Fulham, Moody being the absentee. He received a nasty kick on the leg at the Northampton match, and again on the same spot at Fulham, and with the cup-tie in view it was not thought advisable to risk it again. Bradley was therefore given his position, and, according to some critics, this should have guaranteed a crop of goals. At one time it was intended to send Jarvis in goal, and, indeed, his name figured on the official programme, but he had been very unwell during the week and Platt was between the uprights as usual. Still, it did read rather curious in the London Press reports when it stated Platt took the place of Jarvis.

New Brompton are having quite a successful time this season, and their gates have grown enormously. They have a much more thickly populated district than Luton to draw from, but, as a rule, they have been badly supported. However, on Saturday there must have been well over 6,000 spectators present and it is certain it was the biggest crowd that has ever welcomed Luton on that ground. They made one change from what they consider their strongest side, Reid being on the injured list, and a local named Shepard was introduced at inside left.

There was a very strong wind blowing, and as "Bob" lost the toss, the home team had this advantage at the start. But the first half was pretty even, and it was hard luck to have a goal put through in the last minute before the interval after Luton's defence had held out for forty-four minutes. Especially such a goal! Certainly Platt was not to blame this time; he was bundled into by the home inside forward and never got a chance to hold the ball. He punched at it several times, but could not get it away through the close attentions of Powell and Co.

The actual netting was left to Powell, who was the last one to touch it during the struggle, but the ball more than once appeared through previous to this.

Naturally, Luton players strongly appealed that Platt was charged while not holding the ball, and that a foul should be given, but the referee would not listen, and as events turned out the match was won.

It is difficult for a referee to decide as to what constitutes a foul under those circumstances, and generally the home team get the advantage, as witness the disallowing of a goal at Swindon, which was certainly much more fairly obtained than the one under notice, and the one scored by Moody against Portsmouth at Luton, which was strongly protested against by the visiting officials.

In the second half for a time New Brompton looked likely to materially increase their lead, but during the closing ten minutes Luton made a desperate effort and how Bateup's goal escaped is a mystery. It is not the first time this season Luton have finished up strongly, and it was a great relief to the New Brompton spectators when the referee called time. Indeed, for two or three minutes previous he had been advised to consult his watch.

Naturally Moody's absence upset the combination of the Luton forward line, although Bradley did well under the circumstances. Still Stansfield did not get quite the same nursing with the ball, Brown and Haycock being the better wing. The half-back line played their usual clever game.

The most satisfactory feature of the match was the great improvement in the defence further back. Platt was not, perhaps, so hardly worked as in some matches, but this was because of the manner in which McCurdy and Gregory held up the home forwards, while their kicking was marvellously clean, and the ball was generally cleared from danger; not simply muddled away.

The teams were as under:—

New Brompton: Bateup; W Henderson and Boyle; P. Henderson, Mavin and Arthurs; Reynolds, Whyman, Powell, Shepard and Pickett.

Luton: Platt; McCurdy and Gregory; F. Hawkes, Jones, and R. Hawkes; Brown, Haycock, Menzies, Bradley and Stansfield.

Referee, Mr. G. Rose (Coventry).

Luton made the first run down, Haycock only failing to reach the ball by about a yard, Bateup having run out to pick up a long punt from the centre of the field. From Bateup's return kick New Brompton got away, and Pickett appeared likely to come through, but McCurdy finely tackled him, and secured the ball, and with a mighty kick relieved the pressure.

During an attack on the other side of the field R. Hawkes just got in the way of Reynolds, and gave a corner, which was splendidly placed, but Platt dashing out fisted the ball right over the heads of a crowd of players.

Luton forwards hereabouts gave a pretty exhibition of combined play. The movement commenced with a clever pass from F. Hawkes to Haycock, and the latter just held the ball sufficiently long to draw the home defence to his side of the field before parting with it to Menzies, who promptly turned it over to Bradley, and Stansfield being left alone was put in possession by Bradley.

Running down the touch line at express speed, Stansfield put in a dropping centre which looked a very dangerous customer for any goalkeeper to deal with, but, unfortunately, the elevation was a trifle too high, and the ball went over for a goal kick. Still it was a very clever piece of work for all that.

Shepard appeared to have a clear run through, but he dallied with the ball, and F. Hawkes made a fine clearance by banging the sphere out on the opposite touch line. The ball was taken to the opposite end of the field by Brown and Haycock, and the latter's shot went in like a shot from a cannon, but Bateup managed to just touch it over the bar for a corner kick. Haycock repeated his target practice a moment or so later, but this time the ball went just over the bar without the help of Bateup.

The New Brompton goal had a marvellous escape when Stansfield finished a fine run by dropping the ball right into the mouth of goal, and Brown dashing up met it with his head and drove it hard on the side of the upright, Bateup being completely beaten.

Nine times out of ten the ball striking the post in this manner would have entered the net, but this time it came back into play and was ultimately cleared. It was a let off, indeed, for New Brompton as everyone was prepared to agree.

Pickett had not been particularly dangerous up to this point, but a few minutes before the interval he seemed to improve immensely, and he gave Powell a splendid opportunity on one occasion, but the home centre kicked wildly, and the ball flew yards over amid groans from the spectators for if Powell had steadied himself he should have made certain of a goal.

But the goal did come just on the interval, Pickett again dropping in a centre this time practically under the bar. With the three inside forwards right up Platt punched at the ball, but before he could get his fist to it properly he was bundled into, and he simply knocked it up in the air.

During the melee which followed Platt was kicked on the thigh. Still he got his hand once or twice to the ball, and it is almost certain once the ball was knocked through, and then cleared, while still in the air, but all doubt was set at rest by Powell, and the ball found its final resting place at the back of the net. It now remained for the referee to decide if the goal counted, and he pointed to the centre and would not alter his decision. Half-time came along within a minute with the score:—

New Brompton, 1 goal, Luton nil.

The second half started with Luton having the better of the exchanges, and Stansfield forced a corner through following up, and thus harassing Henderson in his attempt to clear the ball quite close to the corner flag. The flag kick was splendidly placed, and in trying to clear Marvin headed another corner, which was cleared.

Menzies cleverly tricked Marvin in midfield, and sending out to Brown the latter ran through, but his centre went behind for a goal kick.

But as time progressed the home attack was seen to more advantage, and Luton were hardly pressed to keep them out. Reynolds was rushing through on one occasion after leaving Gregory, but McCurdy coming across blocked the ball with his body.

The referee at first gave a penalty, which was in any case a bad mistake, for Mac was certainly outside the fatal area when he met the ball. However on consulting the linesman on that side of the field he altered his decision and threw the ball up, which was the only thing to do, for no offence had taken place.

The referee afterwards explained he thought the linesman had signalled for a stoppage, and as McCurdy had not touched anyone it must have been for handling inside the area. It should be stated in fairness to Mr. Rose, that McCurdy was between him and the ball at the time.

Pickett made several promising runs down the wing and twice at least banged the ball at goal from the touch line, but in each case it struck the outside of the net.

Luton were only occasionally dangerous at this stage, but they almost equalised when Bob Hawkes gave Menzies a clever pass, and the whole forward line swooped down on Bateup, who ran forward to meet the ball. The Brompton goalie, however, did not get it away, and Bradley headed it back towards an open goal, but it just missed the upright on the wrong side. Bradley at the moment was back to the goal, and it was a good attempt under the circumstances.

During the closing minutes Luton were right on top, and it is difficult to explain how Bateup's charge remained intact. Three or four times, at least, it appeared certain Luton must equalise and shots simply rained in, but they either just missed or some defender managed to get in the way quite as much by luck as good judgment.

The home players wasted time in any way possible, and no doubt from their point of view the end justified the means, for nothing further came in the way of scoring, and the final result was:—

New Brompton 1 goal, Luton nil.