

The Southern League.

NEW BROMPTON v. LUTON.

Played at New Brompton on Saturday.
Result:—

New Brompton	1 goal.
Luton	nil.

The teams were as follow:—

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

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

Referee, Mr. G. Rose (Coventry).

Luton have almost invariably been seen to advantage on the New Brompton ground; indeed, it was remarked on the local programme that only twice had New Brompton beaten them on their own pitch in eight seasons. But there is not the slightest doubt that this season New Brompton have the best team in their history, and it was apparent that Luton would have to be on their best behaviour to win. Both teams were one short of full strength, and, curiously, in each case it was at inside-left. Bradley thus came into the side in quite a new position. The crowd were rather late in turning up because of the early start, but at the finish there were over 6,000 present, this being quite up to the average.

New Brompton had the help of a strong wind as a result of winning the toss, but the opening ten minutes were distinctly in Luton's favour. Bateup soon had to rush out in double quick time to prevent Haycock getting in a shot from a long pass up the field. The home goalie just reached the ball in time, or Luton's inside-right must have scored. The New Brompton right wing certainly broke away once at this stage, but Reynolds' pass was placed forward, and Powell was given offside, although this did not much matter, for Platt caught the ball and relieved to make sure. This was a mere flash in the pan, and Luton were playing the better football. One fine passing run from all their front rank except Brown was almost turned to advantage, but Stansfield got just a shade too high with his centre from the line, and the ball dropped on top of the net.

At the opposite end Platt brought off a couple of saves, but in neither case was he hampered, and the shots from Shepherd and Whyman respectively were rather tame attempts. Some tricky forward work was seen from Luton's right-wing pair, and the ball was worked down well towards the danger zone. Menzies, however, instead of pushing through himself, turned the ball over to Brown, who was standing quite clear, and ran forward to receive the return centre, but Brown made poor use of this opening and tamely put the ball over the line for a goal kick.

In tackling Powell in midfield Jones handled, but the place kick was badly taken, and the ball went for a goal kick. Play was mostly in midfield for a considerable time, the defence on both sides being very safe, but a pass from Bradley gave Menzies a chance to have a shot. The latter's effort lacked sting, and did little more than reach Bateup, who had no difficulty in clearing. Haycock did much better with a couple of really fine attempts, the first of which Bateup just succeeded in touching over the bar for a corner, whilst the second shaved the bar as it flew over at a terrific pace.

Shepherd ran through, closely attended by Bob Hawkes, who came right across the field, seeing McCurdy was beaten, but he could not prevent the New Brompton inside-left getting in his shot. Platt, however, punched the ball away, only to find Reynolds getting possession, and it looked a certain goal until Gregory, racing up, caused Reynolds to touch over the line in his endeavour to get a clear opening. Luton were awarded a corner, which was placed behind, but the visitors were decidedly unlucky just afterwards in not scoring from a grand centre dropped across by Stansfield. It went just over the heads of a crowd of players immediately in front of Bateup, but Brown dashing up, got his head to the ball, and with about two yards of space between Bateup and the post, it seemed nothing could prevent the ball entering the net, but in trying to clear Bateup, he just got it the merest trifle wide, and the ball striking the upright with a bang, came back into play and was ultimately cleared. This was indeed a let-off for the home club.

Half-time was fast approaching, and it looked odds on a clean sheet, which would have been good business for Luton, seeing they would have the help of the wind in the second "45," but Powell had a fine chance from a pass by Pickett, being left with only Platt to beat. He made a wild attempt, and the ball travelled yards over. Then just a minute before the interval Pickett again dropped across a centre, which looked to be curling under the bar, and Platt shaped as if to punch it away down the field. The New Brompton three inside men were also racing into goal at the same moment and really charged Platt at the time that he punched at the ball; consequently he could not get it away. Platt managed to again get his fist to the ball but could not possibly clear, and finally Powell headed it to the back of the net. It is quite on the cards that the ball had been well under the bar before the home centre applied his head, and nine times out of ten the referee would have given a foul for charging the goalkeeper when not actually holding the ball.

Luton soon earned a couple of corners in the second half, and for a few minutes really promised to equalise. Gradually but surely, however, the home attack got the upper hand, and up to ten minutes from time appeared more than likely to increase their advantage. Several corners were forced, but as was the case with Luton at this end of the field, they

were more often than not put behind on account of the wind. Matters looked serious when the referee blew his whistle and pointed to the penalty spot following a clearance by McCurdy. It was a mistake, and, urged by the Luton players, he consulted the linesman on that side of the field, and ultimately threw the ball up outside the area, which, by the way, was the actual spot where McCurdy breasted the ball. Pickett was doing much better this half, and two or three times he put the ball in with tremendous force, but he usually failed to get his attempts in front of Platt, and twice at least his shots struck the side net.

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Luton got dangerous as a result of a finely-judged pass from Bob Hawkes all along the carpet to Menzies. The latter gave Brown a beautiful pass, and Brown returned the ball to the centre. Bateup made a dash forward and just touched the ball without clearing, and Bradley made a gallant attempt to head through the empty goal, only, however, to place wide. Another lucky escape for New Brompton. This seemed to put more heart into Luton's attack, as it was evident there was yet a chance to draw at least, for New Brompton had palpably worked themselves to a standstill, and for the final ten minutes it was a continual bombardment of the home goal. Bateup seemed the only New Brompton player who could rise to the occasion, and but for his work at this stage Luton must have won the match by a decent margin. Stansfield, of course, missed his usual partner, but he did much good work in these later stages, while Bradley tried his hardest to live up to his reputation as a goal-scorer, and put in one especially fine shot just the least trifle wide. Still, the home custodian must be accounted a bit lucky, for the light was getting bad, and a chance shot among so many might easily have escaped his watchful eye.

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Taking a review of the match, I must say Luton were unlucky to lose, and a draw would have been a fairer indication of the game. I see one paper heads the report "Platt v. New Brompton," but that is all moonshine, for certainly Platt had no more work than Bateup. Still, Platt kept a good goal, and made no mistake such as in some recent matches. But probably the most satisfaction from a Luton point of view will be that, for the first time this season, their backs were not inferior to their opponents. McCurdy and Gregory both rose to the occasion, and it was decidedly the safest exhibition of defensive play they or another pair have given this season. Possibly R. Hawkes was most in the picture at half-back, but his comrades did all that could be expected, and as a line performed well. Undoubtedly the right wing were the stronger pair on Saturday, and Haycock is playing vastly better football than at the start of the season, while although he does not yet find the net so often as his admirers desire, his shooting was very fine on several occasions. Bradley, perhaps, did as well as could be reasonably expected, but played the individual game to a greater extent than Moody would have done, and thus Stansfield was not given so many chances.

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New Brompton were well served at half-back, Mavin being the pick, and P. Henderson rather spoilt his game by some unfair tactics against Stansfield. Reynolds and Whyman were the cleverer forwards, and though Powell played the bustling game, he could not be put down as a clever pivot. Pickett only shone at intervals, and probably missed Reid, who is on the injured list.