

Southern League.

WITH LUTON TOWN.

Points Shared with Swindon.

FAST AND EVEN GAME.

By "Vigilant."

While it is true that it is points that count in League football it does not necessarily follow that the number of points gained by a team afford a correct gage of the merits of their displays. For instance, Luton Town registered only one point in their two week-end Southern League engagements, whereas their performances were, of themselves, highly meritorious. Against Southampton on Saturday, and against Swindon on Monday, they proved themselves worthy rivals of teams destined to figure prominently in this season's tournament, and their opponents can well afford to congratulate themselves upon having emerged from the fixtures with such success.

Swindon were not always a power to be reckoned with in the Southern League, but their success last season has put them on their mettle, and they are again going strong for premier honours. It was Luton who put an end to their chances of finishing at the head of affairs last April. In consequence of snow the Railwaymen's visit was postponed to the last week of the season, and the general opinion of those who saw the game was that it was the best witnessed on the Bury Park enclosure during the season. Monday's game was just such another fine one, but the result was not the same. Two goals were scored this time instead of one, and Swindon picked up one of the points they then dropped.

There were twelve of the players who took part in the memorable match of last season figuring in Monday's game. Five of them were Lutonians, viz.: Jarvis, Chapman, Fred Hawkes, Jones, and Stansfield. The members of the Swindon team who did not visit Luton last April were Skiller, Kay, Silto and Lavery. Kay and Lavery played against the Blues at Swindon last season, when the Railwaymen won 4-1, but the other players are new. Skiller is the goalkeeper secured from Aston Villa, to make up for the departure of Ling to Brentford, and Silto is a half-back from Barnsley. Bannister, the centre-half, McCulloch, the centre forward from Bradford Park Avenue, and Wheatcroft, the inside left from Reading, were the most notable absentees. Luton made but one change from Saturday's team, Brown displacing Porter at outside right.

The teams were:—

Luton—Jarvis; Chapman and Hedley; F Hawkes, Jones, and Trueman; Brown, Quinn, Smith, Moore and Stansfield.

Swindon—Skiller; Kay and Walker; Tout, Silto and Chambers; Jefferson, Fleming, Lavery, Bown and Fenton.

Referee: Mr A. Farrant, Bristol.

There was an unusually small attendance of spectators when the teams lined out, but the crowd was more than doubled before half-time, and altogether the "gate" was quite as large as could be expected for a Monday match. A four o'clock start was quite late enough, and it was delayed for a minute or two on account of the referee sending the Swindon goalkeeper back to put on a shirt which could be distinguished from the bright red worn by his comrades. The instructions were not at all to his liking, but the referee was insistent, and Skiller eventually came out in a grey sweater à la Jarvis.

The talkative Chambers who captained the Swindon team had the choice of ends, and elected to defend the Town goal. From the kick-off a hot pace was set, and the play was remarkably interesting. Swindon were the first to get dangerous, a clever backheel by Lavery sending Fenton through. The outside left got close in, but Jarvis showed splendid anticipation, and smartly snapped up his centre and cleared. Play then settled down for a few minutes in the visitors' half, but the only incident of note was a long shot by Quinn which afforded Skiller no difficulty. A breakaway by Jefferson looked ominous for Luton. Jarvis, however, was again successful in intercepting the centre, a feat he performed in clever style.

Six minutes' play brought an altogether unexpected goal for the homeesters. Stansfield and Moore broke away on the left, and from Harold's centre Smith put the ball across to the right. Quinn and Walker reached it at the same moment, and the back could easily have got out of the difficulty by conceding a corner. Instead he tried to beat Quinn, and the inside right came out of the tussle on top, and was left with only the goalkeeper to beat at six yards range. It seemed a thousand to one against him scoring, as the goalkeeper had him angled, and there was only a few inches showing between Skiller and the upright. Quinn, however, blazed away as hard as he could, and the fates were in his favour. The ball kept rather low and Skiller, who involuntarily turned a little aside, was unable to keep it out.

of the net. It was quite the best thing Quinn has done on the Luton ground, and it made him a big favourite with the crowd.

The Blues supporters were highly delighted with this early success, but like Dickens' Oliver Twist, they wanted more. For some minutes it looked as though their wish would be gratified, and Swindon were rather lucky to escape. Skiller had to come out to fist away a beautiful centre by Stansfield, and then a couple of excellently judged centres from Brown led to an exciting time round the goal. There was any amount of miskicking going on in the goalmouth, Blues and Reds being equally at fault, and eventually a nasty situation was relieved.

A breakaway by the Swindon left, saw Jarvis called upon to deal with a smart shot by Fenton, but Luton were soon back to the attack. Encouraged by his early success, Quinn was showing an amount of resource and dash altogether foreign to his previous displays, and he was prominent in many of the homesters' attacks. One splendid piece of work led to the left wing getting into action, and Moore distinguished himself with a fine shot which Skiller dealt with in masterly style.

A short period of excitement round the Luton goal followed from a corner wrongly awarded to Swindon. There was a fear that the mistake would prove fatal to the homesters, but Jarvis successfully coped with an awkward shot from Bown, and after a deal of hard work the Luton defence broke up a determined attack. A free kick against the Railway men placed the Blues on the aggressive once again, Smith calling upon Skiller with a smart piece of head work. The ball came out to the right, and Brown, heading into the centre, enabled Quinn to make a dash for goal. It was a dash, too, and a hot shot struck the side of the net. The movement deserved a better fate, for Quinn was undoubtedly pushed by an opponent in the penalty area, and this must have spoiled his shot.

Directly afterwards Smith tried to break through from a centre from the left, but the Swindon backs sandwiched him and gave him a severe shaking. A particularly smart piece of combination by Quinn and Brown led to Ernie working his way through. Coming inside, he made a capital shot, but Skiller jumped up and held the ball, and, avoiding the attentions of Smith, cleared in fine style.

The game was being fought out with splendid keenness, but the Blues were so far well "on top." They were repeatedly pressing, and although the Swindon defence was superb Skiller had a great deal to do. Once the defence was completely out-manceuvred and the Blues were very unlucky not to score. A centre from Brown passed clean across the goal mouth to Moore, who was within three yards of the goal line, but the inside left was obviously taken completely by surprise. He made no effort to bring his shooting boot into action, and the crowd gasped in dismay as he ran the ball over the line.

After this Swindon were rather more in the picture. Their attacks became more persistent and before the pressure was broken up the visitors had drawn level. Chapman's attempt to clear a dangerous looking centre from Fenton was not attended with very great success, and Lavery pounced upon the ball in good position. Side stepping Hedley he sent to Fleming, who was unmarked, and the international had no difficulty whatever in landing the ball out of the reach of Jarvis.

This occurred about a quarter of an hour before the interval, and right up to the change of ends Swindon continued to be the more dangerous. Fred Hawkes saved an ominous looking situation by the concession of a corner, and from this a weak clearance by Trueman paved the way for a hot shot by Silto, which Jarvis was well content to tip over. Dick had to leave his goal to hand away the resultant kick, and then Tout missed by a few inches with a trimmer. Quinn led a Luton break-away, and Brown's centre was a beauty, but it came awkwardly for Moore, who failed to control the ball when admirably placed. The Blues also had a narrow escape just before the change of ends. Jefferson got off, and his centre left the inside men in admirable position. Bown was forced to hand over to Lavery, but the centre man really ought to have scored, shooting well over with only Jarvis to beat. Hence the half-time score was:—

LUTON, 1; SWINDON 1.

Luton were the first to settle down after the change of ends. Smith snapped up the ball from the goal-line, and with a back-heel pass gave Brown a good chance, but Ernie's centre was a bit too high for Moore. A free kick just outside the penalty area aroused a great deal of excitement. Jones' trick of feinting and allowing Hedley to take the shot did not come off, as the shot was beaten down, but the pressure was not unattended with anxiety to the visitors. With the ball rebounding across to the right Quinn missed a fairly good chance. Brown recovered and landed into the centre, and Smith neatly touched to Moore, who was whistled up for offside just as he was about to smash the ball into the net.

For fully twenty minutes the Blues continued to do the greater part of the attacking, but the defence was so sound that they rarely became really dangerous. Smith was about the only one to call upon Skiller, and this was a very tame affair. The Swindon right wing made repeated efforts to transfer matters, but Jefferson was nearly always getting offside. Eventually some bungling by Chapman enabled Fleming to get to close quarters. The angle was a difficult one, however, and although the shot was a smart one Jarvis experienced no difficulty with it. Then Hedley let in Jefferson with a miskick, but the back was quickly after him, and the Swindon player failed to steer the ball out of his reach, though he made three efforts.

A long dropping shot from Silto gave Jarvis all he could do to touch it over the bar, and directly afterwards Chapman effected a very lucky clearance. Then Luton had another lock in, and from a corner Jones shot in along the ground, and Stansfield scooped just over the bar. A long pot by Hedley gave Skiller some anxiety. Smith, who rushed him, alleged the goalie gave away a corner, but the referee thought otherwise.

Twice in quick succession the Swindon goal had wondrously lucky escapes. Stansfield raced down the left and beating Kay got close in. He was angled and, realising the hopelessness of attempting a shot, he quietly touched the ball into the centre. Smith and Skiller went for it together, and they came a very bad crash. The goalie appeared to get the worst of it, but he saved the situation. It was not his fault that he was not beaten a minute or so later. From a throw in Trueman landed the ball into the centre and Smith let fly at once. It was a magnificent effort and the goalkeeper was completely out of it, but just as the cheers were beginning to break out the ball was seen to crash against the crossbar and rebounded into play. It was a cruel piece of luck and deserved the sympathies which everyone felt for Luton's centre.

Just previous to this Jefferson had been giving a good deal of trouble, and there were some fine duels between him and Hedley. The back exhibited marked skill and resource, but Jefferson was fast and tricky and once or twice he came out of the tussles on the right side. On one occasion he out-manceuvred both the backs and was only inches out with an oblique shot. In the last few minutes both teams went all out for a winning goal, and right up to the final whistle the result was in doubt. A shot from Smith bounced awkwardly and gave Skiller some difficulty, but although the goalie

was floored by the centre forward he got the ball away. In the last two minutes the Blues pressed very hard, and the Swindon defence were hard put to it to keep the scores level. Following centres by Brown and Trueman one of the backs nearly headed in, but Skiller was always on the alert. A corner to Luton was cleared amid considerable excitement and immediately after "time" was whistled with the score:—

LUTON, 1; SWINDON 1.

COMMENTS ON THE PLAY AND PLAYERS.

Without a doubt Swindon are again this season to be numbered among the smartest teams in the Southern League, and the Blues are to be complimented upon giving them such a hard run. It was a particularly interesting game right through, and just a little luck would have been sufficient to turn the scales either one way or the other. The Railwaymen had a front line composed entirely of the players who played together for the greater part of last season, but they are not considered the best forward rank Swindon can put into the field, and, with the exception of the right wing pair, they did not show up as well as the Luton vanguard. The visitors were, however, the strongest in defence, and this was what enabled them to hold their own, for the Blues did by far the greater part of the attacking.

Perhaps the two most notable successes on the home side were Hedley and Quinn. The back was always conspicuous, and towered head and shoulders above any other player on the field. The International, Fleming, and his speedy partner, Jefferson, were always too much for Trueman, who was hardly so good as usual, and it was only Hedley's sterling work that prevented the pair from working havoc which other teams have experienced at their hands. Time after time he nipped in and spoiled their movements, and, with the exception of a couple of miskicks, his kicking was superb. It was Hedley's best display this season, and it is a great pity he has not a more useful partner. Chapman does many smart things in the way of tackling, but his kicking does not improve a bit, and he seems to possess no understanding with his partner.

In coupling the name of Quinn with that of Hedley, I am not intending to make any comparison, nor, indeed, am I desirous of suggesting that Quinn came second in order of merit among the Luton players. All I intended to convey was that his display surpassed, by very long chalks, anything that has been previously seen of him by the Blues' supporters. It must have been a treat to him to experience expressions of commendation from the crowd, and it is to be hoped he will now endeavour to enhance his popularity. I am told he showed great improvement at Southampton, and certainly on Monday he deserved the encouragement he received. True, his old faults were in evidence, but he exhibited an amount of fearlessness and resource which had hitherto been lacking, and if he can maintain that dash and combine with it a little coolness in front of goal he may yet live up to his reputation as a goal-getter. He may not be a forward of the same class as his older colleagues, but there is no reason why he should not be a less pronounced weakness than has been the case in some of the matches.

As to the other forwards, Smith was as useful as ever; always to the fore when there was forceful work to be done. Ernie Brown was given more chances than has been the case recently, and both he and Stansfield did much that was good. Moore was not so serviceable as in some former games. Jones was the most prominent at half, and no more need be said of Jarvis than he did all that could be humanly expected.

Excepting for their right wing Swindon were most prominent in defence. Tout, at right half, and Kay, at right back, were perhaps the pick, but all were brilliant. Chambers, the captain, was about the least conspicuous in play, but he made up for this by his talkative proclivities and his throw-in feats. There are few halves who can throw in so far and with so much advantage to their side.