

LUTON VISIT BRISTOL.

Christmas Day Verdict Reversed

Although Hedley made the journey to Bristol on Boxing Day his ankle was not sound, and Rayner turned out in his place, while Johnson fell into the vacancy at half-back. The Rovers made one change, Roberts being dropped in favour of Mason. Seeing it was the first home game for two months it was not surprising that a big crowd assembled. It numbered over 10,000, notwithstanding the damp outlook. The teams turned out as under:—

Bristol Rovers:—Roney; Ovens and Westwood; Williams, Shaw and Handley; Peplow, Rogers, Corbett, Mason and Lawrie.

Luton:—Jarvis; Rayner and Chapman; Fred Hawkes, Jones and Johnson; Brown, Quinn, Smith, Moody and Stansfield.

Referee, Mr. C. R. Hall, Birmingham.

The game was not more than four minutes old before a somewhat lucky goal was netted by Mason, the ball coming to him from a burst through on the part of Corbett. When the inside-left received the ball he stumbled and the chance seemed gone, but, recovering himself, he ran on and beat Jarvis from fifteen yards' range with a fast ground shot. For a time the Luton defence was hard pressed, but gradually the Rovers' attack wore itself out, and then the visitors took up the running, and Roney was kept very busy. At one stage three corners were taken in less than two minutes, and each time the Rovers' goal all but fell, but Roney brought off a marvellous clearance. Still the pressure merited at least an equaliser, but luck seemed dead against Luton. The ball invariably struck some Bristol player. Jones tried to get one in with his head, but Roney just managed to jump across and prevent a score. The hardest piece of luck of all also came from Luton's centre-half off a place kick, which Jones drove well into goal at a terrific pace, only for Roney to again bring off a magnificent save.

Though Smith was well watched all through, he wriggled through several times, but could not get a clear opening, being hampered all the time. On the Rovers' side Corbett was continually forcing the game, and he appeared very dangerous on many occasions. Indeed, the game was of a fast nature throughout, but as the interval approached the Rovers' attack fell off considerably. Still Luton could not break down the fine defence, Roney, in particular, standing in the way. Without a doubt it was his work that stood between Luton and a leading advantage. He had much more to do than Jarvis and played a daring game, taking many risks. Half-time score:—Bristol Rovers 1, Luton nil.

The second half, like the first, very early found the Rovers with a goal, Rogers doing the trick this time. He snapped up a fast centre from the left wing and, just hooking the ball away from Johnson, planted it through before anyone could judge he would shoot. It was a chance shot in a way, for he did not give himself time to aim straight and simply took a pot shot, and it came off. Notwithstanding this set-back Luton still played up in fine style, and more than once appeared certain to get through. Smith must be getting used to rough usage by now, but in no match this season was a more bare-faced penalty missed than when the Luton centre-forward, getting a pass from Moody, went right into the mouth of goal. He was cut right down by Westwood not more than three yards off the goal line, and Luton naturally claimed a penalty, but the referee would not agree. Meanwhile Smith was not able to get up, still the game went on, and Rogers got clean away to the opposite end of the ground and appeared to have an open goal, but his final attempt was charged down luckily. Smith recovered soon afterwards, and did not come off the field. Johnson was next in the wars and was obliged to leave the field, through a nasty kick on the muscle of his arm. He soon returned and continued to the end, although he held his arm rather helpless. It almost appeared as if it was broken. Happily this did not prove to be the case.

Luton's final rally was well sustained, and about a minute before the final whistle their efforts were rewarded. Brown getting well down on the right, dropped across a grand centre, which caused Roney to come out a yard or two with the evident intention of knocking the ball away first time. Smith was well up, however, and headed it right away into the net. Time came quickly, with the result exactly reversed from Saturday—Bristol Rovers 2, Luton 1.

A draw would have been a much fairer result, and had the penalty been given no doubt this would have been the result, although a fresh artist at taking penalty kicks would have been needed, seeing Hedley was not playing. Chapman proved the more reliable back. Although Rayner worked hard his placing was often at fault. Johnson was by no means a failure in his latest position, and kept Peplow under control in a most capable manner after he settled down. Smith played his usual dashing game, and was once or twice over anxious to score against his old team. Still, he had this satisfaction at the finish and was naturally very pleased at his success.

Roney was the outstanding figure in the Rovers' defence, while forward the three insides all did well. Much was expected of Peplow, but he never really got going, and was almost a failure, Lawrie doing much more effective work on the opposite wing.