

Southern League.

LUTON v. SOUTHEND.

Played at Roots Hall, Prittlewell, on Saturday. Result:—

Luton	4 goals.
Southend	1 goal.

The teams turned out as under:—

Luton—Naisby; Chapman and Potts; F. Hawkes, Johnson, and R. M. Hawkes; Brown, Quinn, Smith, Moody, and Stansfield.

Southend—Clarke; Murray and Molyneux; Emery, J. Harwood, and Craig; Parke, Frost, King, McKenna, and Luton.

Referee, Mr C. C. Fallowfield (Streatham).

Although compelled to make one change from the side successful against Southampton, the team sent to Southend was generally considered capable of holding its own. Still, the most enthusiastic supporter of the "Straw-workers" scarcely anticipated such a brilliant result as the actual one secured. Among the small following which accompanied the team on their first away journey of the season were several who were also present on that glorious afternoon when Luton out-stayed and out-played the Seaside in the English Cup replay two seasons ago. Curiously, Luton scored four goals on that occasion, although then it took a couple of hours, for it will be remembered, an extra half-hour was played.

Bushell has early got in the wars, for on the opening day he sustained a badly-cut lip, while in the return friendly at Watford he had the misfortune to break his finger. Under the circumstances, Johnson was given the centre-half position; indeed, it was almost a case of Hobson's choice, for the Club's reserve resources are extremely limited, and a series of injuries would place the Directors in an awkward position. The previous week Southend rather startled the football world by drawing level at West Ham, after losing three goals in the opening twelve minutes, and it was expected they would get a fine welcome on this their first appearance at home. They made one change in the side, Lavers being dropped in favour of J. Harwood, who had played a fine game in one of the practice matches, but could not turn out at Boleyn Castle on account of a week's suspension for some offence in the previous season. But this alteration did not meet with success, Harwood playing poorly, and from what I remember of Lavers last season he would have done much better, although a rough diamond.

The ground at Roots Hall is not as level as that at Luton, and there is a decided slope from the centre of the field, which rather handicaps strange teams. The favourite scoring end is down this slope, and Southend winning the toss, naturally chose to play in that direction. The first run of the match was put in by the home left wing, and McKenna's final shot went hard on the outside of the side net, much to the relief of the Luton defence. But Luton were soon on the warpath, a fine run through by Stansfield and Moody ending up with a nice pass from the last-named right across the ground to Brown, who drew the defence and then promptly returned the ball over to the left, but, unfortunately, Ernie got it too far over, and Stansfield, who had meanwhile worked in towards goal, failed to get back in time to get in his shot.

The first corner of the match fell to Southend, but nothing came of it, and Luton were quickly attacking again. Smith tried a long drive, which Clarke did well to get away, for Brown was right on the spot, and a slip would have meant an almost certain goal. During the opening quarter-of-an-hour, the game was pretty fast, and King was seen making tracks towards Naisby after neatly tricking Chapman, but the Luton goalie just stopped the final drive and kicked the ball into touch well down the field. Johnson, with a long pass out to Brown, sent the Luton right-winger away in fine style, but Ernie could not get sufficient screw on his attempt to centre, and the ball travelled out for a goal kick. Another right-wing attack threatened danger, Quinn giving the ball to Stansfield with an almost open goal to shoot at, but Harold made a rather bad miss, the ball going over the bar when it seemed a goal should have been an easy matter.

Southend made one other dangerous attack

Southend made one other dangerous attack when a free kick was given against Johnson. The ball was placed finely, but Naisby brought off a good save, and gradually Luton were coming out on top, for by this time the forwards had quite settled down, and were putting in some splendid combined work. Stansfield was going strong in mid-field, and appeared to have the measure of Murray, but somehow his target practice was at fault. On one occasion he brought the ball down in great style, and, transferring to Brown, the home defence were quite bewildered, but the ball being returned across the field, Stansfield placed wide in his attempt to score. This, however, was not so easy a chance as the one mentioned previously, for the Luton winger was standing at an awkward angle when he was compelled to take his shot.

The home spectators had one glorious minute during the game. A run down on the part of McKenna and Dunn saw the latter send in a terrific cross drive, which Naisby just touched but could not prevent entering the net, and a mighty shout went up when it was seen the "Gipsies" had opened the score. But their triumph was very short-lived, for, without a home player touching the ball again, the scores were brought level once more. Right away from the kick-off, Luton went down the field. Brown put the ball across, and a mix-up in goal gave Moody his opening, and he took full advantage of the opportunity, giving the Lutonians present a chance to cheer, and they did to quite a surprising extent, thereby proving that a decent number were present.

There was still a quarter of an hour left before the interval, and it is really surprising Luton did not take the lead. Certainly they fully deserved to do, for by this time the home defence were almost run off their legs by the tricky Luton vanguard. A free kick some distance out led up to the most exciting incident before half-time. Clarke, coming out, missed the ball altogether, and it only needed to touch a Luton player to cross the line, with a bunch of them between Clarke and his goal, but it just missed everybody in a most tantalising manner, and was finally cleared amid many expressions of relief from the spectators at the back of the home goal. Consequently, the teams retired for half-time with the scores equal, although it was freely expressed that Luton should have been leading by a couple of goals at least.

But if Luton were the better side in the first half, their superiority was even more manifest in the second, and it only needed a leading goal to quite settle the result. For a time it appeared the home goal bore a charmed existence, and Luton could not get their just reward. A really fine centre from Brown gave Stansfield still another chance to notch a goal, but Harold quite failed to get the ball, and another opportunity was lost. A minute or two later Quinn put in a grand drive from almost forty yards' range, but the ball just went over the bar, while a foot lower would have meant a certain goal, for the shot was practically unstoppable. Again following a nice movement on the part of Stansfield, the ball was dropped nicely in front, and Quinn seemed certain to score, but again his elevation was at fault, and the ball went over the bar, although this appeared much more difficult to accomplish than placing through from the position Quinn occupied, for he was well in the goal-mouth.

It was almost a continual attack on Clarke, but a temporary raid by the home vanguard forced a corner kick, and this almost led up to another goal for the Gipsies. The ball was got away from the original kick, but fell at the feet of Emery a few yards out, and he let drive with a fine attempt. Naisby was at the oppo-

site end of the goal, but Johnson, standing almost under the bar, headed the ball over for a second corner. It was a lucky escape for Luton, although it would have been downright hard luck if they had gone behind on the play at this stage. However, this was the last time they were in danger of losing, for midway in the concluding half, Bert Moody got in a fine cross shot, and gave Luton the lead for the first time during the match. Everyone recognised this settled matters, as Luton were quite masters of the situation. On two occasions later Moody all but repeated his success; indeed, Clarke fell at the second of these attempts, and only just managed to secure the ball when it seemed certain to beat him. It was his finest save of the match.

Eight minutes from time, Quinn met a centre from Stansfield, and completely beat Clarke, the ball going through over the goalkeeper's outstretched arm. A minute later the ball went into the net again, but this time the referee gave a foul against Luton, it being judged that Clarke had been charged after he got rid of the ball. But another goal eventually came from Moody, who took up a neat pass from his partner, and netted, making his individual score into three for the match. All interest had now gone out of the game for the local people, and the band of Lutonians formed up to give their pets a rousing reception as they left the field.

The victory was well deserved, and with the least shade of luck might have been much more pronounced. It is early to talk of championship honours, but if the team steer clear of injuries they should earn a good position on the table on present form. It is, however, perfectly true they will not always have Southend to meet, for the fact of the matter is the "Gipsies" are scarcely an average Southern League side on the form shown on Saturday, and unless there is a decided improvement, will become strong candidates for the second division. It may be nothing more than a coincidence, but last season Luton won their first away match at the expense of the ultimate wooden spoonists, and Southend will naturally hope history will not repeat itself at their expense. Naisby did what he had to do in good style, but he was not over-worked. Potts was the hero in defence, and his kicking was very fine; indeed, the work put in by Chapman and Potts was far in advance of the home backs, although, of course, the difference in the strength of the forward line opposed to them must be taken into account. Fred and "Bob" Hawkes also played one of their stylish games, and helped not a little in the grand performance. But possibly even more credit is due to Johnson, for, placed in quite an unaccustomed position, he never relaxed his efforts for a single moment, and King, in particular, had a very uncomfortable afternoon. But it was the forwards who were so much admired even by the Southend spectators. Smith was not seen quite so much as usual, and few scoring chances came his way, but he kept the wings going finely, and they were in great form. Stansfield certainly failed at the target, but his wing work was grand, and with Moody in his old form, this wing promises to be a great improvement on last season. Brown also was a constant source of worry to Craig in particular, and Quinn played his usual clever inside game. To sum up, all the side did excellently, and there was not a weak spot anywhere.

Southend, of course, came out badly as a team, and but for Emery they could not be compared to Luton. Clarke was none too certain in his methods, while his backs could not hold the Luton forwards. Undoubtedly, the great failure, however, was J. Harwood, for he was invariably just that second too late in tackling, and his judgment was very bad even when he did manage to get the ball. There was little forward work to praise, but what credit can be given must go to the left wing pair.

Of the other Southern League games, perhaps the most noteworthy was that at Watford, where Brighton, the champions, were unexpectedly beaten by 2 goals to 1, the home team winning on their merits. Coventry City, who are due at Luton next Saturday, showed that their defeat by Queen's Park Rangers was not to be taken as a criterion, for they beat West Ham by 3 goals to nil, while the Rangers went down at New Brompton by a goal to nil.

Swindon drew at Brentford (1-1), Millwall at Norwich (1-1), and Northampton at Plymouth (0-0), and the other results were:—Southampton 3, Portsmouth 0; Crystal Palace 1, Bristol Rovers 0; Leyton 1, Exeter City 0. It is a curious thing that Exeter, Portsmouth, and Bristol have not scored a goal between them.