

Southern League.

LUTON v. COVENTRY CITY.

Played at Luton on Saturday. Result:—

Luton 4 goals.

Coventry 2 goals

Teams:—

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

Coventry—Evans; Saul and Gordon; Hickleton, Bradley, and Johnson; Tickle, Arnold, Powell, Warren, and Buckle.

Referee, Mr. A. Adams (Nottingham).

After Luton's brilliant victory at Southend on the previous Saturday, following upon the win against Southampton, it was generally expected that the home team would obtain both points at stake on Saturday. So they did, but it was only after a stern contest, the issue of which was in doubt until about five minutes from the end. Then one of the Coventry players had the misfortune to put through his own goal, and Smith scored the fourth with a chance shot.

The weather being fine, there were between seven and eight thousand spectators, and their cheering in the concluding stages helped Luton on to victory when the Coventry players were feeling that they had just about had enough. Coventry are not a scientific team, but they know how to play the open game, and although their forwards did not combine so well as those of Luton, they were very quick on the ball. The visitors had some advantage so far as height was concerned, especially in the defence, where Saul was very conspicuous.

In their first Southern League match, Coventry had lost to Queen's Park Rangers by 5 goals to nil at Park Royal, but on the following Saturday, playing at home, they beat West Ham by 3 goals to nothing. They had also knocked Wolverhampton Wanderers out of the Birmingham Senior Cup Competition, the score being 6 goals to 2. In the West Ham match, Bradley, the ex-Luton player, scored a fine goal. On Saturday, Coventry put into the field what was an experimental team to some extent. Chaplin, the left-half, had not recovered from an injury, and Hendren (inside-left), the Middlesex cricketer, had not put in enough practice to justify his inclusion in the first team. Powell and Arnold are regarded as deputies for Smith and Warren.

Coventry won the toss, but this was not of much advantage. In the opening exchanges three or four free kicks were given against the visitors for technical offences. One was headed wide by Quinn, and the last was taken by Bob Hawkes, whose shot was caught by Evans. Coventry then went to the other end, where Buckle tried a smart curling shot which Naisby cleverly saved. Luton came again after this, but could not make much impression upon the opposing defence.

Buckle seemed to have a chance to score, but Fred Hawkes just prevented him from getting in his kick. The ball went back to Bradley, whose shot was only a trifle too high. A miskick by Potts left Powell with an open goal, but he shot across. A corner for Coventry was headed away by Johnson, and a good clearance by Chapman enabled Stansfield to make the running. The ball went out of play, and a little later good work on the right wing ended in Brown shooting over the corner of the goal.

Luton opened the scoring a quarter of an hour after the start. There were cries of "Penalty" when Quinn was fouled in the penalty area, and some of the players hesitated. Brown seized the opportunity to kick straight across the goal, and Stansfield touched the ball through. The Coventry men strongly protested that Stansfield was off-side, and in the minds of many of the spectators the legitimacy of the point was open to doubt, but the referee had no hesitation in pointing to the centre of the field. Stansfield had rushed up to meet Brown's centre, and he might actually have been on-side when the outside-right kicked the ball.

On the run of the play up to now the goal was not deserved. The style adopted by Coventry was such that Luton did not look like settling down to their usual game, and the visitors had put in some dangerous attacks. The fact that the goal had been scored was of great encouragement to Luton. Moody had a good chance, but lifted the ball over. A centre from Stansfield was met by Quinn, who tried to rush through. Evans came out, and Quinn was pulled up for handling. Another centre from Stansfield went to Smith, but the ball came awkwardly for him, and he could not get in a strong kick.

kick. After Naisby had saved a shot by Powell, Arnold hit the post, and a dangerous situation resulted in Potts conceding a corner. A good centre from Brown might have been turned to account by Stansfield if he had not been charged off the ball. Then Coventry equalised. A centre from the right found Fred Hawkes in the way, but he could only divert the ball, which went to Buckle. His attempt was pushed away by Naisby, and after a bout of heading, Warren hooked the ball into the net.

A lofty centre from Brown was cleared by Evans, who reached over the heads of Moody and Stansfield. Evans was not so successful with another centre from the right, and the ball went out of play off Stansfield, almost touching the bottom of the upright. Four minutes before the interval Coventry took the lead by means of a penalty. Warren was getting through, but had not got the ball under control, when Chapman needlessly charged him in the back. Bradley was entrusted with the kick, and made no mistake.

Both teams attacked again before half-time. A fine flying shot from Tickle on the Coventry right wing was saved by Naisby. At the other end there was a suspicion that Saul used his hands in stemming an aggressive movement by the Luton forwards, but the appeals for a penalty were in vain. At this time Luton's chances did not look particularly rosy, for they were a goal behind and against a team of real triers. So far as actual skill was concerned, Luton were the better team except at back, where Coventry had the advantage.

Luton's position was decidedly improved seven minutes after the resumption. Stansfield got down on the left and was tackled by Hickleton, who could not get the ball away. Saul tried to help his comrade, and succeeded in dispossessing Stansfield for the moment. The outside-left turned round, and seeing the ball just behind him, whipped it across to the mouth of goal. Here Evans was trying to catch it when Smith made a brilliant dash and headed through, falling into goal and grazing his leg. The little finger of Evans' right hand was damaged, and was bound up by the trainer.

Soon afterwards Luton should have scored again. Quinn found himself in possession on the right, and lifted the ball, intending that it should go to Smith, who was right in the mouth of goal, but Evans intercepted it and cleared. After Naisby had brought off a smart save from the Coventry left wing, Moody centred nicely, but Quinn was interfered with when in the act of shooting. A couple of businesslike attacks were made by Coventry, who were having a good share of the play. From one of these movements the ball went behind the goal, and from the other Arnold headed over. Coventry came again on the right wing, and with Potts beaten, Chapman was forced to kick behind.

A lovely centre was dropped across by Brown, and the three inside forwards tried to meet it, but Evans, despite his injury, cleared in fine style. A good shot by Smith went a little wide of the mark, and at the other end a rising shot from Arnold went over. Once again there was a suspicion that Saul handled in preventing Smith from getting in a shot, but the cries for a penalty were unheeded by the referee. A good shot was put in by Brown, and Evans fisted out with his bad hand.

Coventry now began to show signs of tiring, and Luton had more and more of the play as the time wore on. On a few occasions one or two of the Coventry players managed to break away and cause the Luton defence some trouble, but Luton were certainly becoming masters of the situation. The spectators cheered as time after time Luton returned to the attack, and as the minutes went by the excitement increased, for it was realised that whichever side scored now would stand a very good chance of winning.

Once Powell got through on his own. Potts nipped in and prevented him from getting a shot, the result being that Naisby was enabled to come out and clear. With five minutes remaining for play, it seemed that the game would end in a draw. Then, however, good fortune enabled Luton to gain the lead. Quinn tried to get through but was tackled and fell. Fred Hawkes passed the ball forward, and Quinn touched it to Smith. Hickleton was close at hand and kicked towards his own goal. The ball went at a good pace, and curled in against the bottom of the post well out of the reach of Evans.

The spectators were enthusiastic, and Coventry could do nothing against the swift onslaughts of the Luton forwards. It seemed almost too late for another goal to be scored. Still, that is what did happen. In an attack on the left the ball went to Smith, who steadied it and shot from about twenty-five yards' range. It was a very fine shot, and as the sphere went in just under the bar there was a mighty cheer. Up to then the Luton forwards had tried many long shots, but Evans had successfully dealt with all of them. By this one, however, he was well beaten.

So for the third Saturday in succession Luton had won. No doubt there were some people who thought there was an element of luck in the victory, but Luton were certainly the better team in the second half. They were fortunate in being credited with the first goal, perhaps, but some referees would have granted them one, if not two penalties. As in the Southampton match, Luton had played wonderful football in the closing stages, and their staying powers, while saying much for the physical condition of the men, reflected some credit upon the trainer, Billy Lawson.

THOUGHTS ON THE GAME.

Luton will never have a much harder game to play than fell to their lot on Saturday. From a scientific point of view, Coventry City are not a great team, but they have any amount of energy and dash, and their rushing, bustling tactics made it very difficult for Luton to play their proper game. Some time elapsed before the home forwards found their feet, but when they did get going they played very pretty and effective football, and really deserved even better success than that actually achieved.

Smith played a wonderfully good game at centre-forward, kept his wings going splendidly, and his own repeated attempts to break through the Coventry defence were worthy of the highest praise. He has certainly never shown a better turn of speed since he has been at Luton. His first goal was the result of a beautifully timed and brilliant dash, and his second was only a fitting compensation for much hard luck. Stansfield put in a great deal of fast and clever work, but Moody was not quite so often in the picture as in the two previous matches, though perhaps that was not his fault. The right wing were in splendid form, and the whole front string gave a first-rate exhibition.

The halves had an extremely difficult task in coping with the rushes of the Coventry men, but they came out of the ordeal very creditably. Fred Hawkes possibly was the most consistently successful half-back, though he was a little at fault when the visitors scored. Bob Hawkes, as usual, gave a clever display, though falling somewhat short of his best, and Johnson rendered excellent service in a position to which he is not accustomed.

The backs showed some weakness. They allowed

themselves to be flurried, and as a consequence their kicking was not altogether what it should have been. It was a bit unusual for Potts to err in this way, but two or three more matches will probably suffice to give a steadying influence. At present undoubtedly it is the back division which gives most anxiety, but seeing that only five goals have been given away in three matches, there is evidently not so very much room for complaint. At the end of last season Chapman and Potts accomplished great things, and we ought not to make the mistake of asking for perfection all at once. Naisby in goal was not unduly worked, but he responded to all demands in good style.

So far as Coventry were concerned, chief interest centred in Bradley, by reason of his previous association with Luton. He played a very good game indeed, though his methods would be quite out of place in the Luton team. But with the Citizens, it is all dash, and that kind of football they play with astonishing success.

Luton scored more goals than any other League team on Saturday, and they are easily first in that respect as well as in position on the League table. Not only have they eclipsed Southern League clubs in the goal-scoring department, but neither the First nor the Second Division of the English League has a club with as many goals to its credit.

Northampton scored three goals on Saturday against Southampton, who failed to reply, and Portsmouth obtained a similar number against Southend's two. The most surprising result, perhaps, was that at the Palace, where Norwich City were victorious by 3 goals to nil, whilst Brentford also scored a victory away from home at the expense of Bristol Rovers. The other results were:—Queen's Park Rangers 2, Millwall 1; West Ham 2, New Brompton 0; Swindon 2, Leyton 0; Exeter City 2, Watford 0; Brighton and Hove 2, Plymouth Argyle 1.

"Jack" Austin, a prominent local footballer, has signed South-Eastern League forms as an amateur for Woolwich Arsenal. He is well known in Luton by his connection with the Tradesmen's League (now the Wednesday League), and for three seasons he turned out at centre-forward for the Hairdressers, but during the last two seasons he played for the Grocers. He is distinguished amongst the highest goal-scorers in the Tradesmen's League last year. "Jack" turned out for the Arsenal last week against Northampton.

A meeting of the members of the Granville F.C. was held at Harrison's Restaurant on Wednesday in last week, when the captain (B. Custance) and vice-captain (W. King) were elected. The following team was chosen to meet the Banks next Wednesday:—Webster; Bushell and Burgess; Risettio, Willison, and Turvey; S. Custance, Atkins, W. King, B. Custance, and Coe.