

Southern League.

NEW BROMPTON v. LUTON.

Played at New Brompton on Saturday. Result :

New Brompton 2 goals.

Luton 1 goal.

The teams were as follow :—

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

New Brompton — Holmes; Sutherland and Nobbs; Mahon, Strang, and Higgins; Reynolds, Taylor, Court, Cannon, and Pickett.

Referee, Mr. A. W. McQue (London).

Only one change was made in the team which journeyed to New Brompton on Saturday from that which turned out the previous Wednesday, but it was known that Smith and Moody had not altogether shaken off the effects of their injuries, and consequently some fears were entertained that the winning record was in danger. The absentee was Quinn, and it is noteworthy this was the first match he had missed since coming to Luton, for not only did he play in every first team match last season, but also assisted in two mid-week reserve games. Macdonald thus came into the Southern League side pretty early, and as he has not received the regular training of the other members of the team, he could not be expected to altogether fill Quinn's place. Indeed, after playing together so long, the Luton front line would scarcely be made more effective if the cleverest forward playing was introduced just for one game, as undoubtedly the fine results obtained are a direct result of the constant companionship of the whole five.

New Brompton have been fairly satisfied with their performances to date, and only made one alteration, Cannon being given a chance at inside-left, as Satterthwaite had failed to please; otherwise the only fresh player from last season was Holmes as goalkeeper, and seeing Bateup had returned to his old love, the New Brompton officials were bound to seek out a new custodian. At one time New Brompton had very meagre gates, but last season interest revived wonderfully, and now they can command a crowd over the average Southern League attendances. On Saturday some 7,000 spectators assembled, and they were pretty confident of breaking Luton's record, although in the second half, when Luton were practically attacking for three-fourths of the time, this confidence was rudely shaken, and it was a tremendous shout of relief which arose when Taylor's head just turned the winning goal through in favour of New Brompton.

The weather conditions were ideal from a spectator's point of view, but a bit too warm for players, while Luton were called upon to face a bright sun as a result of losing the toss. Still, the game opened in pretty fast style, and some decent combination was shown on both sides without any real exciting incident during the opening few minutes, with one exception. This was a fine bit of combined attack on the part of the Luton front line, which culminated in Moody letting drive in quite his best manner from twenty yards' range. The effort fully deserved a goal, but Bert had the misfortune to aim the slightest bit too high, and the ball striking the crossbar, rebounded out of danger well down the field.

Up to this point neither side could claim a decided advantage, and a goal to either team would have had a tremendous influence on the result, for each set appeared all out for the opening point. It was unfortunate for Luton that as a direct result of this effort Smith's injury of the previous Wednesday should reassert itself; for in turning the ball over to Moody he badly shook up his unsound ankle, and was compelled to retire to the wing, Stansfield and Moody moving one place nearer the right wing. This alteration quite upset the well-known combination for practically the whole of the first half, and consequently the game veered round in favour of New Brompton. But the Luton defence proved very reliable, and Naisby was not seriously troubled except at long intervals. One reason for this, however, was the extremely poor style with which Pickett finished when given the ball. Time after time it was sent out to the left, and Pickett, trapping in the most approved manner, appeared to have the Luton goal in danger, but after raising the hopes of the home spectators, he weakly placed over the goal-line yards off the target.

Taylor put in some fine work on the right, and once it looked a certain goal when he slung the ball over to the left wing, but first Cannon missed and then Pickett fell right over in his eagerness, and the ball went into touch. This was a let-off for Luton, but they had many others, for the home front string were quite incapable of controlling the ball at close quarters. They forced several corners, it is true, but still little real danger was felt by Naisby, as the final efforts were wild. Higgins, apparently disgusted with the poor finish of the front line, tried once or twice to break through on his own, and in one of these foraging expeditions he came into collision with Johnson and got the worse of the argument, the game being stopped to enable him to recover.

Just at this stage plenty of vigour was put into the play, Reynolds and Potts being the next pair to get in the wars, but they quickly recovered, and the game proceeded chiefly in the Luton quarters, for although Naisby was not called upon to exert himself, the ball did not get far away. When Court did get a shot at goal, Naisby was able to punch the ball over the players' heads well out of danger. At last, however, the Luton defence was pierced, the goal coming as a result of a corner kick placed by Reynolds well across the goal-mouth, and Pickett standing near the further upright, breasted through.

Following this, Luton did better, and tried

Following this Luton did better, and took a fair share in attack, one movement started by Bob Hawkes only ending when Moody, standing a foot or so offside, was pulled up by the referee. It was a very near thing, but the whistle-holder was correct. The most dangerous attempt for quite a long time was a grandly-placed free kick given against Fred Hawkes, and Naisby earned the thanks of his comrades by bringing off a brilliant save. It had long been apparent that Smith was quite useless, and he limped off the field twenty minutes before half-time. Being now reduced to four forwards only, it might be thought Luton would fall away, but the contrary was the case, and they kept the home defenders on the alert. In saving one onslaught, Holmes had great difficulty and was compelled to concede a corner kick under pressure, but this was badly placed. Still, it was evident the game was not yet won, and although on the whole the home side had slightly the better of the exchanges in the first half, they could not grumble at the narrow advantage possessed when the teams retired for the interval, for it was quite as much as they deserved on the play.

The first incident after change of ends was a warm attack on Naisby, and Pickett had a good chance to increase the score, but the Luton goalkeeper managed to get the ball out of danger, and Luton came away almost immediately. Brown, seeing his opportunity, put in a puzzling shot from the wing, which Holmes apparently misjudged, and the ball dropped right over his head in the far corner of the net. Luton were naturally encouraged by the incident, and from this point were the attacking party, notwithstanding the depleted state of the front string. Smith came out with the rest, but remained near the touch-line until he retired for good some ten minutes from the close. A slight re-shuffling of the line was made, Macdonald taking the centre, with Moody partnering Brown.

This arrangement seemed to work better than before, and although Smith could do little more than kick the ball when it came to him, he managed to get it across a few times, and once at least a goal should have been the result. But neither Moody nor Macdonald could get the ball under control, and the former passing over to Macdonald, saw the latter's shot turned round the post for a corner kick, Holmes falling down to the attempt. Macdonald put little powder into his effort or he would probably have beaten his opponent, as he could not have been more than five yards out.

When a free kick was awarded to Luton for a foul on the part of Nobbs just outside the penalty area, it looked promising for a leading goal. Johnson feinted to take the kick, and Bob Hawkes following up behind, sent in a terrific drive, but it struck a home defender and went for a corner. This was better placed than some of the earlier ones, but Holmes, with a huge punch, got the ball away. He repeated this a minute later from still another corner kick, and this time he was barely quick enough, for Moody was within an ace of getting his head to the ball at the same moment.

The game was stopped for a couple of minutes when Strang fouled Moody, who was making a burst through the centre, and would probably have scored if he had not been brought down in this way. It would have proved a disaster if Bert had been badly injured, but fortunately he was able to recover after attention from Lawson. Indeed, he was quickly on the warpath again, and twice only just failed with good attempts. However, an even closer thing came along when Johnson, neatly robbing Court, sent in a stinger which Holmes did well to stop. Hereabouts it looked any odds on Luton walking off with the points, for they were continually working down, and once Stansfield appeared to have the goal at his mercy when, by a fine sprint, he beat his man and secured the ball in the centre of the field, but Harold was not so certain in his marksmanship as against Bristol Rovers, and he failed to improve the occasion. A goal just here would have been doubly valuable, for it wanted only four minutes to time.

A draw, however, would have been fairly satisfactory under the circumstances, but for once this season Luton were unlucky, as within the last minute a breakaway by Reynolds spelt disaster. Getting across a fine centre, the ball swerved just sufficiently to deceive Naisby and reach Taylor, who headed through, amid wild scenes of rejoicing on the part of the crowd. It was a most fortunate finish for New Brompton, and almost heart-breaking for Luton, for it was not deserved on the play, and to lose a record under these conditions is most tantalising.

As indicated in the remarks above, there was one period of about twenty minutes in the first half when New Brompton were on top, but at no other part of the game did Luton play second fiddle, and it speaks well for the players that in every game they have proved the better stayers. Undoubtedly Quinn and Smith were greatly missed, and this handicapped Luton's attack, but in every other department they were in good form and no weakness was manifest, the defeat notwithstanding.

Potts was the better back of the pair, his kicking being cleaner than that of Chapman, but the latter was troubled by an old injury to his knee. Still as a pair, they were quite the equal of the New Brompton couple. All the halves did well, but R. Hawkes had one or two nasty knocks which did not tend to make him happier, although the game was not conducted in a dirty manner. Bob, however, seemed to get what knocks there were about, and could scarcely move his jaw on the journey home. As might be expected, Brown, Moody, and Stansfield were the bright ornaments in attack, although Macdonald proved useful and will do better when he gets into condition.

New Brompton are just an ordinary side, but will not often be beaten at home, being vigorous in defence although not a rough lot. Strang at centre-half was most in evidence in defence, and Reynolds and Taylor the better wing. Cannon was little seen, and appeared to be out of his place. It will be remembered he usually figured at outside right when he made his reputation with Hitchin.