

Southern League.

SWINDON v. LUTON.

Played at Swindon on Saturday. Result:—

Swindon 4 goals.

Luton 1 goal.

The teams were as under:—

Luton—Naisby; Chapman and C. Watson; F. Hawkes, Bushell, and Johnson; Brown, Quinn, Smith, Moody, and Stansfield.

Swindon—Skiler; Kay and Walker; Tout, Bannister, and Siltoe; Jefferson, Rushton, Birkinshaw, Bown, and Bolland.

Referee, Mr. G. W. Verge (Willesden).

Although Luton usually come out well in their encounters with Swindon on the Dunstable-road enclosure, they have never been very successful when visiting the railway centre. It is true that last season the result at Swindon was a draw, but the home side were then suffering from the reaction caused by their strenuous Cup fights and were not so keen as usual; therefore the result did not possess a deal of significance. Swindon, in consequence of their Cup success last season, have been able to provide capable reserves, and at the present time have the largest wage bill in their history. Therefore the fact that Fleming and Wheatcroft were unable to assist, did not handicap them as it would have done Luton under similar circumstances, for Birkinshaw and Rushton proved worthy substitutes; indeed, in the opinion of many, the former is a more effective pivot than Wheatcroft. Luton again played Claude Watson in preference to Potts, the last-mentioned player being given a rest in view of Saturday's Cup-tie.

The gate was a small one, and at no time exceeded 4,000, the early start no doubt being partly responsible for this, as in the majority of football centres. Smith kicked off for Luton, and at once a raid was made on the Swindon goal, but it was short-lived, for Johnson, who tried to improve the opportunity, unfortunately placed a trifle wide, although the attempt was a good one. The first attack by Swindon came from Jefferson, who, getting a pass from Bannister, raced down in fine style, but his middle went flying well over the bar. A short kick by Kay let in Stansfield for the moment, but the back quickly recovered, and putting the ball right across to Bolland, it was carried down the wing by the Swindon outside-left, and finally planted well in the mouth of goal. Naisby prevented a goal in the first instance, but could not clear, for quite a crowd of players were on the spot. Once or twice the ball was put back, and eventually Jefferson, meeting it as it came off the upright, sent it through before Naisby could recover himself, and thus Swindon drew first blood inside five minutes. This success infused more life into the game, and Luton attacked, Smith and Quinn getting perilously near to goal. Bannister effected a clearance, and then followed a nice run through by the Swindon forwards, Bolland finally working in and finishing with a hard shot which Naisby did well to stop, but again it was not cleared. There was a tough struggle for possession, but Naisby stuck to his guns and cleared in the end amid much excitement, for it seemed almost impossible to prevent a score, so hot was the pressure. Another centre from Bolland was well met by Chapman, for a miss would have meant Bown having an open goal.

It was only occasionally that Luton got dangerous, but once matters looked promising when a pass across the field found Brown in possession. He neatly tricked Walker, and showing the home back a clean pair of heels, went for goal, but his final effort was very tame, as he placed the ball yards wide in the simplest manner possible. Later on, Smith, going through the centre, was badly fouled some thirty yards out, and a free kick was awarded. This was well placed, and several players tried to get in an effective shot without result, until at last the ball came back to Bushell, who let drive with a fine attempt, only to see it sail about a couple of feet over the bar.

There was an exciting incident following a grand centre from almost over the goal-line on the part of Jefferson, the ball dropping just in the centre of the goal-mouth and a couple of Swindon players being right on the spot. Neither would have been offside from the original centre, and when one of them headed the ball (it was difficult to say which, so near were they together) and it was found resting in the net, the crowd naturally concluded a second goal had been scored, and the referees quite agreed with the popular verdict. But the Luton players held a different opinion, and after some little argument the referee was induced to consult both linesmen, with the result that the goal was struck off. It appears after the ball came off the Swindon player's head, it just struck the boot of the second player, who happened to be a trifle nearer Naisby and was thus offside.

But the relief was only temporary, for a minute or so later Birkinshaw neatly rounded Chapman, and by an individual effort completely beat Naisby, the ball travelling all along the ground into the far corner of the net. It was a clever goal, and well deserved the cheers it received from the spectators. Luton made their most determined effort just before the interval, but they had no luck in shooting, Moody's attempt being well saved, while Brown was the slightest shave out with his shot, and at half-time the score stood two clear goals in favour of Swindon.

The second half went the same way as the first, for Swindon were always on the attack except for a few breakaways, and before long the issue was put beyond all doubt by Rushton scoring a good goal from a chance opening. When he received the ball from a throw-in, he did not seem to have a ghost of a chance of notching a goal, but working round his man, he took deliberate aim and sent the ball flying through the goal just out of Naisby's reach. It did appear a somewhat easy point, but it was of the surprise order and going away from the goalkeeper as it entered the net.

Midway through the second half Luton improved somewhat, and Brown and Quinn made several gallant attempts to retrieve the disaster, and once or twice really looked like breaking through the stubborn Swindon defence, but they were well looked after, and on one occasion the game had to be stopped to enable Quinn to recover from the attentions of the home players. But, as a line, the Luton forwards were not nearly so much in evidence as usual. As no goal came, the home players appeared quite content to rest from the

earlier efforts, and naturally the Luton defence had a somewhat easier time. Still, Jefferson was always lying well out for anything that turned up, and getting a chance, took the ball right down to the line, and with a clever middle all along the ground, gave Bown the easiest chance imaginable, of which he took advantage, and the Railwaymen were four up.

There remained little time for a Luton recovery, but they did manage to get a goal during the closing minutes, Fred Hawkes seizing upon a centre from the left and netting with a well-judged shot, to the delight of his comrades, who otherwise would have lost their record of scoring in every match this season, which they possess in company with Aston Villa only of the sixty big clubs.

Although the defeat appears bad on paper, it compares with the usual fate clubs meet with at Swindon, for Fred Hawkes' goal is only the second that has beaten Skiller on his own pitch, while it was the third time Swindon have scored four goals and once they have netted five. Luton's chief falling away on Saturday was in attack, and it is a long time since they went through a whole game for so little effect, even if they did not make use of their openings. The right wing was certainly the better on Saturday. As a result of the extra work thrown upon them by the persistent attack of the Railwaymen, the middle line could not give that assistance they usually do to their forwards, and this was probably the reason of the comparative ineffectiveness of Luton's quintette. The Luton halves were probably the hardest worked players on the field, and none could be said to have played poorly, although Bushell was about the pick. The chief fault of the back division was the rather poor clearances, for neither player booted the ball down the field so well as the opposing pair, but against this must be set the fact that the latter were not "played on" to the extent the Luton couple were. Naisby could not be blamed for the defeat, and did really well.

Skiller had comparatively little to do, and of the backs Kay was the sounder, although both did well. The middle line were a trio of workers, and although short of their regular players, the home attack gave a fine exhibition of thrusting forward work. Boland did well at first, but was overshadowed by Jefferson in the second half, and the Southern League winger was the most effective player on the field. Probably Birkinshaw stood next, and if he is again put out of the team, it will not be for want of ability, but simply on account of the greater experience of Wheatcroft. Anyway, he is a much better centre-forward than the majority of Southern League clubs possess.

By beating Stockport County, at the third attempt, by a goal to nil, Rochdale qualified on Monday to meet Luton in the next round of the Cup Competition on Saturday next. The match will be played at Rochdale, where it is expected a 10,000 gate may be relied upon. The Rochdale team is made up of players who have been identified with the three principal Leagues, and includes Biggar, the old Watford custodian, in goal, and Blackett, the old Luton man. I also hear that Rankin, who at one time played for Luton, is connected with the team, which likewise includes five men who formerly played for Bradford Park Avenue.

Luton, who will make the journey on Friday, have certainly got no snip on. For two seasons Rochdale have not been beaten on their own ground, and this season they have not been beaten at home or away since Sept. 10th. Nevertheless they are not quite of the class that Luton are accustomed to, and a real determined effort should be sufficient to pull through.

But if Luton are to win, the forwards will not have to waste time and effort on the close passing game, and the backs will not have to both toe the same line, as they all too often do, so that when an opposing forward gets by one, he has practically beaten both. If Luton play the open game which enabled them to pull the match out of the fire at Brighton, they should stand a good chance of winning.