

English Cup.

ROCHDALE v. LUTON.

Played at Rochdale on Saturday. Result:—

Luton	1 goal.
Rochdale	1 goal.

The teams were as under:—

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

Rochdale—Biggar; Blackett and Riddle; Cooper, Thomasson, and Henderson; Manning, Fleetwood, Kenyon, Grierson, and Smith.

Referee, Mr. J. Duckworth (Blackburn).

For the first time for many years, Luton turned out a team at full strength in a Football Association Cup-tie. But it was a close thing, as on Saturday morning Bushell reported himself as not at all well, but it was ultimately decided that he should play. Except that Biggar and Blackett figured in the side, Rochdale were quite an unknown quantity; still, their stubborn and successful fight with Stockport County stamped them as dangerous, and the Luton players were fully cognisant they had no snip on.

When the players arrived on the ground, they at once took a look at the playing surface, and although the turf itself was pretty good, it was seen the decided slope would take some knowing, and would be worth a goal or so to the home team. The rain held off, and the wind was blowing hard in the direction of the bottom goal, and the team winning the toss appeared to have a fine chance of taking a commanding lead. The verdict went forth that two goals at least were required to make matters safe. Therefore, when Luton won the toss, they had hopes of getting a winning advantage at the interval.

Two early free kicks against Luton for technical fouls placed their goal in danger, but nothing came of either, and gradually the home players were beaten back into their own quarters. Still it was some minutes before a real attempt at scoring was made, and then Smith tried a high shot, which was taken well over the bar by the wind without causing Biggar any particular anxiety. The Luton right wing were doing the major portion of the attacking, and Brown gave his partner a decent opening, but Quinn could not manage to direct the ball truly and placed wide.

Although Luton maintained considerable pressure, the home forwards were by no means idle, and put plenty of dash into their efforts whenever there was the slightest chance to get down the field. They appeared to cover the ground faster than Luton, who attempted to play the orthodox methods under the handicap of a strong breeze. Still, it was only occasionally that Rochdale broke clean away, for both Chapman and Potts were down on the spot every time, and when they were beaten the halves fell back, especially the captain, who once bobbed up when everything looked over and cleared in great style.

About twenty minutes after the start the Luton left wing eluded Blackett, and Stansfield put across a lovely centre to Quinn, who made a dash forward, and meeting the ball with his head, placed it cleverly into the far corner of the net well out of Biggar's reach. It appeared a very simple matter to score, and the local officials considered it a soft affair, but it was one of those unstoppable points, for Biggar never had the slightest chance to get at the ball, while it is more than likely if Quinn had tried to "blind" the goal-keeper the result would not have been so satisfactory.

Having taken the lead, it seemed for a time only a matter of how soon Luton would add to their total, for they were now having decidedly the better of the game, but they constantly worked for openings that never came instead of taking first-time shots. Towards the close of the first half, Potts, in tackling, met with a nasty kick, and rolled over in evident agony. The game was stopped, but after attention from Lawson, Potts resumed playing, although it was patent he was seriously handicapped for the rest of the match.

Just before the interval Smith got a fine chance, the ball coming to him when standing all on his own, although it is true he was a trifle wide of the goal. Biggar, realising that only a desperate effort would prevent a goal, dashed out, and the ball struck him as it left Smith's foot, and was finally got away. It was an unlucky incident for Luton, for Smith, in his attempt to slip it between Biggar and the goal, placed the ball too fine, and a splendid opportunity to make matters safe went begging.

It is curious that the next "near thing" for Luton also came from Smith immediately after the change over. The Luton centre went through in great style, and, taking aim, tried to place the ball in to corner of the net. Biggar went down to meet it, but he would have been just too late if the ball had a clear course. Unfortunately, it just touched one of the defenders in its flight, and this diverted it sufficiently for it to travel wide of the upright. A goal at this stage would have been invaluable, and in all probability Luton would have won the match, as a two-goals' lead takes some breaking down.

As it was, it was a stubborn contest for the next goal, the remark being made in my hearing that whoever scored the next goal would win the match. There seemed a deal of logic in this reasoning, although, as events turned out it was not correct. A fine sprint on the part of Smith, the home left-winger, finished with a grand middle, which Fleetwood snapped up and drove home in capital style, and thus the teams were once more level, with the odds in favour of Rochdale.

Luton were forced to play on the defensive for the rest of the game, and they came out of the ordeal with distinct credit. It was the hottest half an hour they have been called upon to face this season, but the way all the players stuck to their guns deserves every praise. Towards the close of the match, when it was evident Luton were giving nothing away, the small band of Lutonians present were pleased to know there was a likelihood of a replay at Luton, and their hopes of figuring in the competition proper rose considerably, although it was recognised that Rochdale would be no easy prey even at Luton.

For once, the honours went to the defence. Naisby had plenty of work and did it well, giving every confidence by the way he cleared every time. He did not have so many difficult shots as might be imagined, but he did everything in so clean a manner that there was no chance of a return surprise coming off. Chapman and Potts both kicked much stronger than has been the case in some games, and were not at all hesitating in their tackling. Chapman had the most difficult wing to deal

with in Smith and Grierson, this pair being the smartest wing on the field.

All the halves did finely when pressed in the second half, and towards the close even Bob Hawkes did not hesitate to kick out, which of course is not his usual practice. Most of the good forward work from Luton naturally was seen in the first half, and as a line they were better balanced than Rochdale, but they did not force home their midfield advantage as they should have done, and as they did do in the early part of the season.

Rochdale possess a good side, being triers every one. Undoubtedly the best player is Smith at outside left, and he would be welcomed by many first-class clubs. Manning also played a good game on the other extreme, but he did not have so good a partner as his colleague and so suffered somewhat. In the middle line Henderson is a regular worrier and wants a deal of beating, but the pick of this division was Thomasson at centre-half, and he kept a sharp eye on the Luton inside men. Contrary to expectations, the full backs were not above the ordinary. Blackett was the better of the two, and he is yet a fine general. Of Biggar, it is only necessary to state he made no mistake, and if not so hard worked as Naisby, brought off several saves in his well-known style.

The gate was £170, and was a record for the ground, although not up to local expectations.