

Contrast in Northern and Southern Tactics.

"By Vigilant."

Whatever fate may befall them in the New Year, it is good to be able to chronicle the fact that Luton Town will this season be among the clubs figuring in the Competition Proper of the F.A. Cup. Last season fate played them a scurvy trick in robbing them of this privilege, and they would have had good grounds for calling out—aye, even bitterly—if they had again been one of the absentees this season, after their sterling feat at Rochdale, on Saturday. The success of the Lancashire Combination team in the replay at Luton yesterday could only have been described as the triumph of unscrupulous tactics, such as, thank goodness, we are not very familiar with in the South. Drawing-room football is not looked for in Cup-ties, but on the other hand, it is not unreasonable to expect to see something resembling the ordinary football one is accustomed to witness in League games, and yesterday we did not even get that. The tactics of the Northerners were rather more suited to the prize fighting arena than the football field, and it would have been the greatest pity in the world if they had prevailed.

The average Lutonian who has followed football for any length of time will tell you it is many years since he saw anything like the display of the Rochdale team, and I can well believe it. Goodness knows how many free kicks were awarded for fouls, but the whistle always seemed to be going, and even then no one could accuse the referee of being unduly severe on foul tactics. I am not suggesting that the Homesters were free from breaches of the laws in this respect, but I certainly do suggest that they were not the aggressors, and further, that their sinning was not a tenth of the extent to which they were sinned against. Potts was crippled so badly at Rochdale that he was not able to turn out yesterday, and it was well for him he took no risks, because most of the Blues were put through the mill pretty stiffly. Seven or eight of them were "in the wars" at one time or another, and I doubt if anyone has seen Trainer Lawson on the field of play so many times in any one match. Quinn and Brown were as lame as worn-out horses before the finish, and I imagine "Billy" will have his work cut out to get the whole of his team fit for Saturday's match at the Crystal Palace.

The Rochdale players seemed to have no compunction at all as to the manner in which they brought down an opponent, and the crowd were not at all satisfied with the leniency shown them by the referee. Two players, at least, committed offences so glaring—and so utterly out of harmony with the sporting spirit of the game—that many referees would have given them marching orders without hesitation. Most of the spectators—and there were about 4,000 of them, representing a "gate" of about £100—were quite disgusted with the proceedings long before the end of the game arrived, and the demonstrations made from time to time against the ruling official threatened to conclude with something regrettable. That, at any rate, was rather feared by some, for I noticed a pretty strong contingent of plain clothes police officers arrive on the ground during the second half. It all ended with shouting, however, for, in spite of what they had to contend against, the Blues won the victory they so thoroughly deserved.

Both the teams had one change from the sides which met at Rochdale. Ashton came in for Potts in the Luton back division, and Freeborough was at centre half for Rochdale in place of Thomasson. From the start typical Cup-tie energy characterised the efforts of both teams, but the tactics of the visitors caused the game to degenerate considerably, and though it was always an exciting match, good football was almost at a discount. The Luton attack seemed to be quite at sea on the heavy turf, and with the Rochdale team playing for all they were worth on their speedy wingers, it was on the Blues' defence that the brunt of the work fell in the first quarter of an hour. Then there came a change, for nineteen minutes from the kick-off, Quinn just got his head to a centre from Stansfield, and the ball dropped inside the post.

There was no more scoring until five minutes before the interval, and then we had three goals all in a hump. Grierson was half brought down by Bushell, about forty yards out, but he touched the ball on to Kenyon, who started clear—he was rank offside—was never overtaken, and drawing Naisby out, equalised without much difficulty. Two minutes passed, and Luton were ahead again. Moody was enabled, by a misunderstanding between Biggar and one of his backs, to wrest the ball from them, and he sent it across the goal-mouth. It cannoned off one, if not two, of the visiting players to Smith, who shot into an empty goal. Then the left back miskicked a centre from Stansfield, and Smith passed to the right for Quinn to score with a magnificent shot—and get a nasty smack from an opponent in the bargain.

Luton's lead was 3-1 at the interval, and the only other goal of the game came directly after the restart. Chapman brought the centre forward down with what certainly appeared a real square shoulder charge, but the referee awarded a penalty, and Smith, the outside-left, scored. For the rest of the game Luton were masters of the situation, though when Rochdale got going they became very dangerous, and, unable to add to their score, Luton successfully turned their attention to defence towards the close. Thus they emerged from the qualifying competition by 3-2. They have a stiff hurdle in the next round on January 14, having to go to Northampton.

Luton Clarence are drawn at home against Enfield in the first round of the F.A. Amateur Cup (Competition Proper) on January 7.

If you were unable to be present at the match on Wednesday, you can see the game in Pictures to-night and during the week at the Picture Palace, Gordon-street.—Advt.