

SOUTHERN LEAGUE.

LUTON'S BEST WIN FOR FOUR MONTHS.

Three Goals and a Clean Sheet against New Brompton.

By "Vigilant."

The weather conditions were so ideal for football on Saturday afternoon that with anything like an attractive match on the card there would probably have been a large crowd on the Town ground at Luton on Saturday. But New Brompton could hardly be regarded as a "draw," for they are one of the candidates for relegation, and on their own ground in September they only managed to beat the Blues in the last minute, when the Luton team had been weakened and disorganised by injuries. There were consequently only about 5,000 spectators, and the attendance did not look like reaching that at one time. The result was 3-0 in favour of Luton, a distinct advance on recent performances—excepting, of course, the very creditable display at Coventry a week ago—but the score somewhat flatters the Blues. Any other result than a win for the homesters would have been a travesty of justice, for the opposition was anything but formidable. All the same the Blues did not shine by any manner of means, and it was not until the last quarter of an hour that their superiority was at all pronounced.

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Luton's captain returned to the side, which was consequently at full strength, Potts and Wightman being retained as partners in the back division. The visitors had to take the field without their centre forward, Court, Satterthwaite, who with his elder brother was once with Woolwich Arsenal, returning to the team. Mr. C. C. Fallowfield, of Streatham, was in charge of the teams as follows:—

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

New Brompton.—Holmes; Mosley and Nobbs; Mahon, Strang, and Higgins; Reynolds, Taylor, Satterthwaite, Cannon, and Westwood.

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It did not matter much who won the toss, because the breeze, blowing from the town end, was so slight as to be scarcely noticeable. As a matter of fact, Bob Hawkes had the choice of ends, and the little benefit it gave is indicated by the fact that Luton left all their scoring until the change of ends. The ground lent itself admirably to clever football, the turf being soft and springy without being on the heavy side, and considering how ideal the conditions were in every respect it was rather surprising to note the time the players took to settle down. End to end play of a scratchy description was the order for some time, and there was nothing that could by any stretch of imagination be termed eventful until Bushell took first time aim at a range of about twenty-five yards, and sent a fine shot whizzing inches by the wrong side of the post. The first pressure to be really felt was at the Luton end, where both Potts and Wightman distinguished themselves with smart breaking-up tactics and faultless clearances.

It was not for long, however, that the Blues were content to be overshadowed, and when the halves and forwards settled down to that clever type of footwork which they can exhibit when really in fettle they made the visitors look very poor stuff. Brown was responsible for a very clever shot, which Holmes had to save under pressure from Smith and Moody, and receiving from the save, Quinn drove in wide of the mark. The Blues' pressure was now very persistent, but their work in front of goal was just as lacking in polish as was the defence of the Brompton backs. Scrimmages in front of the visiting goal were fairly frequent, and one or two of them threatened to result in a score, but the backs managed to scramble out of their difficulty somehow. Bushell, trying another flying pot, landed the ball well out of the ground, and directly after this the visitors owed an escape to sheer luck. A particularly clever run by Quinn gave an opening to Brown, and from his partner's centre Tommy headed in. As Holmes came out to clear, Moody's head bobbed up and sent the ball just over the bar with the goal empty.

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The Blues had now completely taken charge of the game, and with a marked improvement in their finish, it was fortunate for the visitors that Holmes was at his very best, for he had a very anxious time of it. Stansfield, with unlimited resource, pierced the defence on the left, and Holmes had to reach over the heads of the Blues' inside forwards to make a very smart save. He could only touch the ball feebly away, and Brown returned it into the danger zone. Stansfield came into the centre and snapped up the opening, passing to Quinn, whose shot must have been a scorer had not the ball unluckily come into contact with one of the opposing side standing in the goal-mouth.

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When at last New Brompton raised the siege Westwood got well away, but his centre dropped into the side net. Their next effort resulted in a rather lucky corner, Wightman being charged on to the ball as he was allowing it to run out of play, and from this Naisby was tested for the first time. It was a beauty, and he could do no more than just push the ball away. But Holmes was not idle long. Stansfield cleverly worked down the wing, and some people were just beginning to criticise his fondness for beating the back, when he slipped round Mosley, caught the ball up on the goal line, and swung in a low centre, which Smith met and turned in with the same movement. The deftness of the move would have made it a scorer nineteen times out of twenty, but this was the twentieth, for Holmes happened to be just where he was, and instinctively, it seemed, he caught the ball and hurled it round the post. It was a marvellous save, for Smith shot at only about five yards' range. The goalie had to make two more smart

saves in quick succession from the corner kick, and after this he had a brief rest.

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As a matter of fact, the Blues fell away unaccountably all of a sudden, and though there was not any great merit in the visitors' attack, they certainly claimed the balance of play for some time. Reynolds, breaking away and swinging the ball across, left Satterthwaite and Cannon with only Wightman and Naisby barring their way. The back spoiled his man, but could not get the ball away, and an ugly situation was relieved by the smartness of Naisby in dashing out and rendering the needful aid. Danger was once more threatened by Reynolds, and this time he directed a stinger at Naisby, who did not get the ball away without getting a nasty smack from Taylor. The Luton backs were, however, rarely failing to meet the calls made upon them, and the ball was kept up and down the field at a pretty lively pace.

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Holmes almost got too far under a centre from Stansfield, sending the ball straight up in the air, but his reach enabled him to rob Quinn of an open goal, and though Brown got the ball again into the goal-mouth, nothing came of it. Wightman came in for loud applause by reason of a smashing drive from over the half-way line, which would have given Holmes some trouble had not Mosley's head been in the way. A corner to the visitors resulted in Satterthwaite skimming the bar from an offside position, and after Fred Hawkes had distinguished himself with a capital though unsuccessful scoring attempt, Naisby had to deal with a fine effort by Reynolds, who was giving a good deal of trouble.

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For the rest of the half all the scoring attempts were at the visitors' end. Stansfield again drew Holmes out with a tricky centre. In order to hand away the goalkeeper had to fall full length, and Brown missed a glorious chance by putting weakly by with an open goal. Two similar centres came from Stansfield in quick succession. Quinn headed just wide from the first, and Moody negotiated the other with such effect that Holmes rushed out in the nick of time to rob Quinn of a fine chance. This he accomplished at the expense of a corner, and from Brown's kick he effectively smothered the inside forwards. But his best feat of all was in keeping out a sterling shot from Smith, at arm's length. Stansfield, rushing in, struck the side of the net from the rebound, and as this occurred just before the interval, the half-time whistle came with the score:—

LUTON	0
NEW BROMPTON	0

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The visitors had two remarkable escapes immediately on the restart. The Blues went down in a line from the kick-off, and Brown dropped in a lovely centre, which threatened almost certain disaster. But though the goalkeeper was completely nonplussed, neither Moody or Stansfield could get to the ball to make use of the opportunity, and the best that could be managed was a corner. This was magnificently placed by Stansfield, and Holmes saved with great difficulty under the bar. Luton's escape a couple of minutes later was just as remarkable, though it would have been the fault of the Blues themselves—or, at least, some of them—if their colours had been lowered. Bob Hawkes and Naisby were still to appeal for offside, and allowed Reynolds to centre at his leisure. The ball came immediately across the goal, with only Naisby and Wightman facing the opposition, and they would have been helpless if the inside men had been smart to seize upon the opening. No one made an effort, however, until the leather reached Westwood on the other wing, and he shot with so little effect that the ball landed in the outside part of the net.

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For some minutes after this the Blues' attacking line were quite out of the picture. So much so that some wag, standing behind the Brompton goal, wanted to know "What have we done at this other end?" Stansfield at once responded to the call with one of his best runs and centres, and Quinn met the ball finely, but landed it clean in the goalkeeper's hands. Holmes had to throw away hurriedly, but Fred Hawkes returned over the bar. The effort was much too short-lived to be appreciated by the crowd, and the visitors continued to have the better of scrambling play until Smith led his forwards away in grand style. He mastered all the opposition very skilfully, and finished up with a lovely pass to Quinn. Tommy was quite clear, and steadily making for position, he essayed a red hot oblique shot. Even then Holmes was equal to it, and he would probably have got it away but for the fact that Smith had followed up and was ready to complete a really brilliant effort.

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Just a quarter of an hour of the second half had gone when Luton opened the scoring, and for a minute it seemed likely that their success was going to work wonders in the team. Quinn got going again in his best style, and had very bad luck in having a fine shot intercepted by Strang—some thought with his hands. But the pressure was sustained for a little more than a minute. Time after time the visitors got to the Luton goal, only to finish weakly. Fortunately for the Blues their shooting was too awful for words, for they had any amount of opportunities, and yet they were seldom really dangerous, except when they managed to force corner kicks. As often as not they spoiled their movements by lying offside, and in any case, the defence was too good for them, the backs playing splendidly considering the immense amount of work they were called upon to perform.

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It must be confessed that during this time the Blues' forwards had been totally unable to reproduce anything like their accustomed form, and it was ever so welcome a change when, in the last twenty minutes, the homesters began to have something like a look in. Stansfield was the main instrument in this turn of affairs, and he certainly did have a brilliant quarter of an hour. First, he brought the goalkeeper yards out of goal to deal with a tricky centre, and Holmes was very lucky, after being dispossessed by Quinn, not to retire beaten. Then the other wing had just one look in, after which it was all Stansfield for a few minutes. He quite outshone everyone else by his resourceful and tricky work and his critics were among the most enthusiastic in applauding him when, single handed, he beat the Brompton defence all ends up, and nearly repeated the feat in the next minute.

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There were twelve minutes to go when the outside left crowned his good work with as clever a goal as anyone could wish to see. Snapping up the ball near the touch line, he determined to see if he could not succeed where his inside colleagues were failing, and succeed he did. Bringing into play all those deceptive arts which one finds in Stansfield at his best, Harold sidled into the centre with the ball, evading opponent after opponent, and getting actually across to the right side of the goal, he confused those impatient spectators who were urging him to part with the ball, calmly made his opening, and with a right foot shot, gave Holmes no chance whatever. It was indeed a lovely goal, and the cheers had hardly died away when Harold was seen to be at it again. He was evidently beginning to fancy himself as an inside man, for he once more rambled across with the ball to the inside right position, and beat everyone except Nobbs, who bundled him off the ball just as he seemed about to bring off the double event.

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This was all we saw of Stansfield's individuality, but right up to the final whistle he was a constant source of trouble to the visiting defence. Forcing a corner, he placed it so well that the Brompton men had all their work cut out to keep the ball out of goal, and when it was got away Brown returned with such unerring air that Holmes had to take to the ground to keep his charge intact. He was at once surrounded, and in the scrimmage that ensued against the goal-post it was not all football, according to the strict laws of the game. At any rate, Moody seemed to be ruthlessly prilled away from the goalkeeper, but the referee did not observe it, and so the visitors escaped the penalty. But they could not beat off the Luton attack. Brown emerged from the cloud under which he seemed to have been for the best part of the game, and landed in two gems, one of which Holmes saved, and the other of which Stansfield headed just over the bar. Then Quinn became obviously disgusted with himself for missing the

chance of a lifetime right in front of the goal, but half a minute before the whistle blew he amply atoned for this "bloomer." A finely-judged centre from Stansfield was taken to perfection by Tommy, who landed the ball high up in the opposite corner of the net with one of those cannon ball drives which are Quinn's speciality. It was a brilliant ending to the game, making the score:—

LUTON	3
NEW BROMPTON	0

COMMENTS ON THE GAME.

The score represented the most pronounced Southern League win Luton have registered since their last match in September, when they beat Coventry by 3—0, but it by no means represented their best performance of late. It is a curious circumstance which has often been commented upon, that the Blues seldom show up at all well against weak opposition, and this was exactly the case on Saturday. Had they been at their best, New Brompton would have been left a very long way behind, for their form was every bit as feeble as their position in the League table would suggest.

As it was, Holmes was the only man who saved them from a much heavier defeat, though the Blues' attack was anything but brilliant. Stansfield was the exception. His play at all times was very clever, and often brilliant, and he quite outshone all his colleagues. Except for occasional flashes, the right wing were singularly ineffective, and the inside men were altogether lacking the fine understanding they exhibited early in the season.

It was not always so, but it certainly was the case on Saturday that the defence was the strong point of the team. What Naisby had to do was faultlessly done, but there was not much of it, because Wightman and Potts played a very strong game, and the halves were quite at their best. Bushell was particularly effective, and it was very noticeable whenever he shone how great a favourite he has become with the Luton crowd.

As to the New Brompton team, it may be said at once that the fact they have scored fewer goals than any other side in the League, and have had as many scored against them as any other team, accurately represents their strength—or rather, the lack of it. The forwards were of absolutely no value near goal, with the possible exception of Reynolds, and leaving out of reckoning the goalkeeper, who gave a fine account of himself, the defence was one of the weakest Luton have been opposed to this season. There was not one of the halves or backs deserving of creditable mention, for all through the work was very patchy. The team will have to improve wonderfully if they are going to escape the Second Division.

LUTON IN THE FIRST HALF.

Coming on top of the gain of a point at Coventry, Luton's success on Saturday takes them up one or two places in the League table and gives them their usual average of one point per match. They were one of only five teams to bag a brace of points, half the matches resulting in draws.