

Southern League.

BRENTFORD v. LUTON.

Played at Griffin Park, Brentford, on Saturday.
Result :—

Brentford 1 goal.
Luton nil.

The teams were as follow :—

Luton—Naisby; Wightman and Potts; F. Hawkes, Busheil, and Johnson; Brown, Walker, Stephenson, Lashbrooke, and Stansfield.

Brentford—Ling; Rhodes and Buxton; Richards, Hamilton, and A. Barclay; Bartlett, Land, Sibbald, Ryalls, and Anderson.

Referee, Mr. G. Rose (Coventry).

The return match with Brentford excited little comment in either centre, which was rather different from last season, when echoes of the Cup-tie made the matches of more than ordinary interest. As R. Hawkes was unable to get away, Johnson once more played at left-half, otherwise what is now looked upon as the strongest available team was out for Luton. Brentford missed Reid, but had the assistance of A. Barclay, the Ilford amateur, at left half. The game attracted scarcely 3,000 spectators.

Luton had what advantage was to be gained by winning the toss, and opened as if they intended to carry all before them. The home defenders were kept pretty busy repelling attacks, and it seemed Ling's charge could not stand the sustained efforts, particularly of Lashbrooke, for long. But no goals resulted, notwithstanding the fact that Lashbrooke drove in three or four attempts in quite fine style, each of which was sent in at a most difficult angle and with plenty of powder behind the ball. Ling was distinctly lucky with at least two, and his coolness at this stage probably had more to do with winning the match for his side than any after event, for a lead of two goals so early in the game would have had a great influence.

The Luton players always maintain they do not get anything like so good a ball away from Luton as they do at home. This was the case again, and after Potts and others had complained to the referee a fresh one was obtained. Still even with a different ball, no impression could be made, and then came an unfortunate matter for Luton, inasmuch as Johnson rather badly hurt his ankle, and practically for the remainder of the game he was of no use to his side. It is true he came back to the field for part of the game, but his effectiveness was gone, and Luton had really only ten men. This quite upset the forward rank by taking Lashbrooke away, and although for a time they managed to hold their own, they were never really so dangerous a line as in the opening quarter of an hour.

Luton forced several corners in the early stages, but it was not until after Johnson's accident that any such advantage fell to the Bees. Even then the first award was a very bad decision, for it was quite evident the ball was put over the line by the Brentford players, but as nothing came of this it did not affect the result. The first time the home side became really dangerous was a nice opening which fell to Ryalls, but his attempt went just a yard too wide, and Land was not sufficiently alert to get to the ball in time. This attack was followed by another, and Sibbald sent in a fine attempt which undoubtedly would have beaten Naisby, but again the direction was a trifle at fault, and the ball knocked down the post which holds the net.

Two further corners fell to the home side, but Naisby punched the ball away each time, and Rhodes finally put by for a goal kick. Then Luton had another look-in, and a clever pass by Stephenson was snapped up by Lashbrooke, only once more to find Ling in form when the Luton inside-left got his shot in. Another promising bid for the opening goal came from Stansfield, who ran in and met a good centre from Brown, but Harold was a shade too high in his aim, although the attempt was a good one. Naisby twice saved, once from a fine shot by Sibbald, and again he punched away in good style a dangerous centre from the left wing.

Most of the shooting hereabouts was taken at long range, and one shot from Stephenson only just failed to find the net. Twice the referee awarded the Bees a free kick when the offence was not very apparent, but even with this help the home players were not really dangerous, and half time came without any goals being scored.

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Johnson came on with the other Luton players, and for a time the exchanges were pretty equal and it was anyone's game. But at last a lucky goal settled the result. Anderson secured the ball well out on the wing, and taking it almost to the corner flag he dropped in what was evidently intended for a centre, but it scarcely reached the nearest upright and was carried by the wind into the goal-mouth. Naisby, taken somewhat by surprise, made a punch at the ball as it was dropping just inside the net at the junction of the bar and upright. He appeared to hit the ball as it fell, but instead of getting it out of danger, it apparently struck the post and rebounded into the net.

Johnson now went off for good, and the encouragement of the goal evidently put more confidence into the home forwards, for they were the attacking party for the major portion of the game. Only once did Luton appear likely to alter the result, and this was a fine run and centre from Brown which dropped nicely in front, and Stephenson as usual was well on the spot and tried to head the ball through, but he got just a trifle too far under it, and the ball went sailing well over the bar. It looked as if a little steadiness must have resulted in an equaliser, but the chance passed, and from now to the finish Luton were on the defensive.

Most chances came to Sibbald, but Wightman played well on the Brentford centre and did not give a deal of rope, and his attentions were scarcely to the liking of the spectators. Still he played a scrupulously fair game, although his kicking was not quite so sure as usual. On one occasion, however, Sibbald managed to dodge Wightman and it looked any odds on a goal, but Naisby angled him and effectually blocked the ball's passage into goal. Getting the ball again, the home centre sent in another drive which Naisby just knocked down without clearing, and Sibbald meeting the return, headed the ball on the crossbar, and thus the hottest attack of the day fizzled out. For a few minutes Brentford were short of Land, who got hurt during these series of attacks, but he soon came back, and the Luton defence did well to keep down the score to a single goal.

The game right through was not a very inspiring affair, and the actual result was probably a fair representation of the play, for Luton were quite the equal of the Bees in the first half, and before Johnson's injury were much the superior party. Then in the second half certainly Brentford had the better of the exchanges, and it was rather wonderful they did not increase their lead. Much credit is due to Wightman for keeping the score down to the smallest limit, and he was undoubtedly the player most in evidence on the field. He got through any amount of work, and if his placing was a bit at fault he must be congratulated upon his tackling, for he seldom made a mistake in this direction. Potts ably helped him, but of course the injury to Johnson made a big difference on this side of the field. The other two Luton half-backs were sound without being brilliant. The front rank, which in the early stages appeared to be in something like Luton's early season form, never quite recovered the fact of Lashbrooke having to act in a double capacity when Johnson got injured. Certainly up to this point Lashbrooke and Stansfield were the finest wing playing, and it was most unfortunate that this partnership to a large extent was broken up. Stephenson put his usual dash into the game, but of course badly missed having a regular man on his left hand.

The outstanding players for Brentford were Ling in the early stages, and Barclay in the second half, when matters were going well for his side. Undoubtedly the Ilford amateur is quite a useful player, having height and weight in his favour. Buxton, who is looked upon by many as the finest left back in the Southern League, was another player to meet the eye, and his work at times was brilliant. For such a little chap, he comes out of dangerous situations in a marvellous manner, and is seldom beaten in close quarters.