

WITH LUTON TOWN IN THE SOUTHERN LEAGUE.

Blues' First Win.

SHEPHERD SCORES THE ONLY GOAL

Naisby Saves a Penalty.

The result at Brentford on Saturday doubtless was a big surprise to the majority of the football world, but the Luton players themselves had certainly not given up hope of a win at Brentford. They realised the results up-to-date were far from what had been expected, but at the same time it was the universal opinion in the team that bad luck had done a great deal to bring about the club's lowly position, and that such misfortune could not always dog their progress. It is true that on paper Luton were represented by the weakest side of the present season, but this possibly inspired the players rather than the reverse. As is well-known, the Directors decided to give Shepherd the centre position in preference to Stephenson, who so far this season has failed to find his shooting boots, and this alteration undoubtedly met with approval. Lashbrooke was the obvious substitute for Moody, but a last minute change on account of Wightman not making the progress expected after his injury the previous Saturday was a more difficult problem. It was not until Friday that it was known Wightman would be unable to play, and the merits of Smith and Ashton to fill the vacancy were a much debated point among those who were aware of the circumstances. Ultimately it was decided to give Smith his chance, for, of course, with Ashton playing either the amateur or Potts would have been compelled to play on his wrong wing.

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Brentford, on the other hand, were able to place out what they consider their strongest side for the first time this season, although, of course, the transfer of Reid was looked upon among a section of their supporters as a weakening of the team. Still Kouse had quite come up to expectations the previous week, and the official view was the side would not suffer. It was a comparatively small crowd, considering the way the Bees had been playing, for a win on Saturday gave them an outside chance of figuring as League leaders, but it is presumed the sudden change in the weather had some influence in keeping down the attendance. For the first time this season the wind was an important factor in the game, although it did not appear to help one side quite so much as was expected, for it blew diagonally across the field. Still, if any advantage was to be gained Brentford had it, for they won the toss, and it was certainly a bit more difficult to get the ball away from the Luton goal when the backs tried a big kick than was the case at the opposite end of the field.

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The teams were constituted as under:—

Luton:—Naisby; Smith and Potts; F. Hawkes (Bushell and R. Hawkes; Brown, Walker, Shepherd, Lashbrooke, and Stansfield.

Brentford:—Ling; Rhodes and Cleverly; Richards, Hamilton, and Hickleton; Brawn, Sibbald, Rouse, Hendren, and Anderson.

Referee, Mr. A. Wilkes, Birmingham.

The first item of interest proved to be a run down on the part of Brown and Walker, who during the movement changed positions, but Walker, who was well out on the touch line, failed to get the ball back into the centre from the vicinity of the corner flag, and it went into touch. The Bees replied with a right-wing attack, Brawn getting the better of a tussle with Potts, and planted the ball nicely across, but Naisby picked up in good style, and cleared. The ball was not long away from the Luton quarters, and Rouse was observed coming down the centre of the field in desperate earnest, but Smith met him with a fine shoulder charge, and the home centre was bowled over, the game being stopped a couple of minutes to enable him to recover. The next time Rouse got a chance to rush towards goal he adopted quite different tactics when he saw Smith making in his direction, for he promptly parted with the ball, which went clean through the Luton back's legs to Anderson, who was quite unmarked. Matters appeared very ominous when to the consternation of the crowd the referee gave offside, and thus spoiled the opening. In all probability the referee was quite correct, but the spectators were very sore, and gave vent to their feelings in no unmistakable manner.

Bushell tried a long drop kick, which bounced just in front of the goal and over the bar, but when the game was twelve minutes old the all-important incident of the match came. Bob Hawkes, pushing the ball through, set his forwards going, and Lashbrooke, neatly passing the ball to Shepherd, got into a nice position for scoring. He evidently expected the Luton centre-forward to return the ball, for he was being tackled by at least two Brentford defenders when he managed to secure possession. Instead, however, of getting rid Shepherd literally forced his way through the opposition, and neatly planted the ball just inside the far upright before Ling realised he was about to shoot. It was a fine goal, and scored under a great handicap with the two Brentford players actually playing right on Shepherd, while the scorer must have been at least sixteen yards out when he took aim.

For a few minutes it looked likely that Luton would increase their lead, especially when Richards miskicked badly, but Ling dashed out and cleared with a long kick into touch. The strong wind was causing the ball to play some curious pranks, and both goals were often in accidental danger from this cause. Both goalkeepers were compelled to be on the alert. Naisby must be congratulated on a smart save from Hendren, who drove in sharply from the wing at a time when no one was expecting him to shoot. Hands were awarded against both teams with great frequency, but several times it appeared the players were quite surprised. The wind was the real cause, for it was quite impossible at times to judge the flight of the ball. Rouse got clear and looked a likely scorer, but Walker came to the rescue of the Luton goal in a most unexpected manner, and Rouse eventually put the ball for a goal kick.

Bob Hawkes was badly "kneed" on the muscle of the thigh, and limped painfully for a minute or two, and finally went off for attention, but was not away many minutes, Lashbrooke falling behind while Bob was absent. Fortunately the home attack was not so worrying during this stage, and the Luton defence were not at all hardly pressed, although naturally the absence of a forward when Luton were attacking was a big handicap. Just after Bob returned Hamilton sent in a grand drive, which Naisby did well to keep out, and at the opposite goal Brown put in a really good attempt low down, which gave Ling a bit of trouble to get away. Brown had another long shot following a free kick to Luton, but again Ling saved, and at half-time the score stood:—

Luton 1, Brentford 0.

Evidently the home forwards had made up their minds to alter the state of affairs on the restart, and a determined effort was made to equalise the scores almost immediately. Sibbald, who secured the ball from the opposite wing, attempted to bring off a surprise after rounding a couple of Lutonians, but he was forced wide to get clear, and his shot only resulted in a goal kick. Again Sibbald was noticed to be making tracks towards goal, but Naisby dashing out saved finely. It was just after this that the first corner of the match came along, and the award was in favour of the Bees, but the ball went behind. Most of the attacking was, however, being done at the Luton goal, and Potts made a grand clearance from a sudden onslaught by Rouse. The game was stopped for a minute or so when Bushell got a nasty kick right on the knee, but after Lawson had exerted his powers, Billy was able to resume, and the effect seemed to gradually wear off. Any way it did not materially affect his play.

Towards the finish Luton laid themselves out to retain the lead at any cost, and the ball was often out of play. About ten minutes before the final the ball was punted towards the Luton goal

from the right wing, and Naisby, watching its flight, purposely held the man off, with the intention of claiming a goal kick. But the referee awarded a corner kick, which Naisby strongly protested against. It was no use, however, and a corner kick was taken. The ball was cleared from this, although the strong defence set up by Luton seemed quite capable of preventing any score, when all at once the referee blew his whistle and pointed to the penalty spot. It is true the ball ran up Potts' arm just inside the penalty area, but there was not the slightest sign of handling, and it would have been terrible luck if this award had meant losing a point. Cleverly was entrusted with the taking of this, but Naisby succeeded in catching the ball, and easily cleared.

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This proved the final exciting incident of a hard game, unless a very good attempt from Brown, who tried a long drive, can be put down as such, but "Ernie's" elevation was too high, and no further scoring taking place the whistle went with the same score as at the interval—

Luton 1, Brentford 0.

COMMENTS ON THE PLAY AND PLAYERS.

No win could have been more welcome, and the Luton players were naturally delighted at the change of fortune, for they have more than once this season deserved victory, only to have their good work nullified by sheer bad luck. Naisby did all that was asked of him in fine style, and brought off three or four really fine saves. Smith also did really well. Although, it is true, he made a few slips, none were of a serious character. He used his weight without being at all dirty, and the home left wing had a wholesome respect for his attentions. In kicking he quite equalled Potts, although, of course, the regular player's experience in tackling at times helped to keep the field clear for his partner.

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Bob Hawkes used splendid judgment in getting the ball well across the field in the first half, when the wind made this very difficult. As a matter of fact, Brown got several good openings from these tactics, for if the ball was allowed to stay on the stand side it was almost certain to go into touch, and Bob exerted all his energy to keep it in play. When the teams changed over and Luton were holding the lead, of course it was not so necessary to keep the ball inside the line, and the home left wing did not use the same judgment as the Luton captain. As a consequence the ball was continually out of play, and this somewhat irritated the spectators in the enclosure. Bushell had a rather persistent customer to tackle in Rouse, but he stuck to him finely, and did not allow him many chances to get clear. Fred Hawkes also contributed his share towards the victory by keeping the home left wing in check, Anderson being in consequence voted below form.

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Without being brilliant the Luton front line played good football, Shepherd keeping his wings together very well, while, if for nothing else than his brilliant goal, his inclusion was fully justified. Brown did not get quite so much help from Walker as usual, Bobby being somewhat of a half-back at times. Still the Luton right-winger, when playing with the wind behind his centres, made many centres, and was unlucky not to score on his own at least twice. Lashbrooke played his usual quiet game, but got very few chances to shoot. Still, he had a hand in the only goal as described above, besides giving Stansfield some nice passes, which Harold made good use of.

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Brentford spectators were inclined to censure their forwards for making such poor use of their chances, and many were the regrets that Reid was allowed to go. Still Rouse did his best, and was their most dangerous forward. Anderson, who appears to be a great favourite, made a sad mess of what few opportunities he got, while Brawn attempted too much at times, and played a rather selfish game. The Bees' defence, as usual with them, was pretty strong. In physique they could give the Lutonians several inches, and this naturally helped them when the ball was in the air.