

Southern League.

BRISTOL ROVERS v. LUTON.

Played at Bristol on Saturday. Result:—

Bristol Rovers	2 goals.
Luton	1 goal.

The teams turned out as under:—

Luton — Naisby; Wightman and Potts; F. Hawkes, Bushell, and R. M. Hawkes; Brown, Walker, Johnson, Moody, and Lashbrooke.

Bristol Rovers—Roney; Harvie and Westwood; Williams, Morris, and Brogan; Peplow, Hughes, Jones, Richards, and J. H. Hughes.

Referee, Mr J. W. Bailey (Leicester).

Goals have been rather scarce with both Luton and Bristol Rovers this season, and therefore a small scoring game was expected as a result of last Saturday's match. Luton had out the strongest side they have had for several weeks, only Stansfield being away from what is now looked upon as the first choice. Curiously, it was at outside-left that the Rovers were also short of full strength, for although they have two professionals engaged for that position, they were compelled to play an amateur, seeing both their pros. were on the injured list.

For some reason Luton never seem to attract the Bristol crowd, and the attendance was below the average, and did not number more than 5,000. The home captain won the toss, and naturally chose to play with the stiff breeze behind him. For some minutes Luton found themselves penned in their own half. Williams got the ball nicely to the centre on one occasion, but Wightman cleared after Peplow had overcome the attentions of Potts. Then a nice piece of work by Brogan found Richards in an easy position for scoring, but he was offside. A passing movement on the part of Richards and Hughes combined to give Jones a chance, but the centre only put the ball wide. The first corner fell to the Rovers, and Peplow placed this all right to his comrade on the further wing, only to find Naisby equal to clearing the shot with ease.

Luton's first attack was pulled up for a foul, and this was quickly followed by the opening goal. Jones tried a long shot which Naisby fisted high up into the air, and Richards promptly bundled into him, thus preventing his getting across to the ball at the opposite end of the goal, and the new winger had simply to wait the ball into the open net, for he was not a yard away from the actual goal-line when the ball came to him. Unquestionably, the game should have been stopped when Naisby was charged after getting rid of the ball in the first instance, but the referee allowed play to continue, and Luton were a goal down before ten minutes had gone by.

Luton now did a little more aggressive work, and a characteristic touch by Bob Hawkes sent Lashbrooke away, and his centre was saved by Roney in fine style as Johnson and Walker dashed into the net. The referee promptly pulled them up for this infringement of the rules—quite contrary to his former decision noted above. But Luton were not done with by any means, and it took Roney all his time to stop a fine cross attempt from Bob Hawkes. He threw himself full length to the ball without being able to clear, although he managed to block its passage, and Westwood coming up at the moment, disposed of the danger.

Brown was a considerable source of trouble to the home defenders, but his final centres lacked judgment, or a different aspect would soon have been put upon the game, for he got the better of both his half and full-back time after time, but wound up with the ball travelling for a goal kick. The play had by this time become pretty equal so far as goal pressure went, but twenty-five minutes from the start the Rovers had the good fortune to score another goal. Peplow came down the field in fine style, and Potts, who went to tackle him, was easily left, and the winger worked across towards the penalty area, when Bushell tried to block his passage, and Peplow taking his kick at the same moment that Bushell and he came into contact found the net with a fine screw shot. Both players tumbled over as a result of the collision, and Bushell got the worse of the deal, and it was several minutes before play was resumed, and then only after Bushell had retired from the field for further attention. Fortunately, the Luton centre-half was not seriously injured, and after a few minutes returned to the fray.

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few minutes returned to the fray.

Ten minutes from half-time Walker caught the home defence napping, and bursting clean through the backs, found himself with a straight run down the centre of the field, and only Roney between him and the net. He was, however, some distance away, and after a moment's hesitation, Roney ran out to meet the oncoming Lutonian. But Walker coolly transferred the ball to Moody before Roney could tackle him, and Bert had an open goal to shoot at. It seemed nothing could prevent his walking into the net with the ball, when Brogan, who had meanwhile been running back, managed to just touch the ball, but could not prevent its passage; in fact, he only helped to make the goal certain by turning the ball a bit harder into the net. There was some wild play for a few minutes after this, and Peplow and Potts got at loggerheads, but nothing more was done up to the interval, and the players retired with the Rovers leading by the odd goal.

Luton were prompt to take advantage of the wind on changing over, and caused the Rovers' defence considerable anxiety. Several decent shots were put in to Roney, but he managed to clear them all in good style, and it was his steadiness at this stage that enabled his side to come out victorious at the finish. The home halves had completely lost their mastery of the Luton forwards, and much pressure was in consequence put upon the backs; but try as they would, the Luton vanguard could not find a weak place in Roney's defence, and all their midfield efforts came to nothing.

It did appear probable, however, that the equalising goal was coming when Brown, coming clean away with a grand dash down the touch-line, found himself clear of all opposition, and tapping the ball inside to Walker, gave his partner the finest opportunity of the match. If only Walker had kept cool and used the same judgment as on the occasion of the first-half goal, all might have been well, for he could have taken the ball almost up to the goalkeeper before shooting, but instead of that, he let fly from long range and the ball went hopelessly over, to the relief of the home crowd.

Towards the end Luton made one or two attempts to rush matters, and a sharp centre by Lashbrooke when on the run was met by Walker, who attempted to head the ball into the corner of the net, but he got a trifle too far under the sphere and it went just over the bar. This was almost the final chance Luton had of saving the game, although just on time Lashbrooke attempted to place a corner kick but failed lamentably, the ball being fired right among the spectators.

Luton were unlucky to lose, considering their efforts after being a couple of goals in arrears so early in the game. But the fact remains they did not take the chances, for more than once Roney must have been beaten with a decent shot if anyone had been capable of aiming accurately. In the opening stages the Rovers appeared likely to set up a good lead, but quite a different tale could be told of the second half, and the home officials were considerably relieved when the final whistle went and the locals were able to claim a majority of the goals.

The Luton defence could not be blamed for the defeat on Saturday, for they stood up to their work in good style and never allowed the Rovers' forwards the least scope. The first goal was a scramble right under the bar, and anything might have happened, while, strictly speaking, the game should have been stopped when Naisby was charged; and Peplow's goal was one of those swift screw shots that come off about once in a score of tries. The Luton forwards were much the superior line in midfield after the first twenty minutes' play, and with Stansfield almost fit, should even yet make an impression on their opponents' goal average. Possibly the right wing were the cleverer pair, and although Johnson did not get many scoring chances, he kept the attack all the while on the move, and with a better understanding coming with a longer acquaintance with the position, should develop into the best centre at the disposal of the Club.

The local scribes were unanimous in giving Luton credit for a plucky second half, and I was informed they made a much better show than the Rangers, who walked away with two valuable points a few weeks since. The Rovers' display did not please them a bit, and if Luton had only got their deserts and secured a draw or even a win, I can fancy the players would have got a rare slating in the local Press. But it is results that count nowadays, and the luck of the game gave the honours to the Rovers in this direction.

Peplow, as usual, was their most dangerous forward, and many are clamouring for his inclusion at centre-forward when the other wingers get fit, for Jones is by no means giving satisfaction. The amateur Hughes did nothing except score the goal, and was easily held by Wightman. Roney and his backs can look back with some satisfaction on the game, for the halves were by no means brilliant under pressure, and let the Luton forwards through time after time, and but for the steadiness of Harvie and Westwood, Luton must have put up a good crop of goals.

The only surprise in the Southern League matches on Saturday was the decisive victory of Northampton over Millwall on the latter's ground, the Cobblers winning by 4 goals to nil. On the West Ham ground, Swindon were victorious by 2 goals to nil, and at New Brompton, Leyton had all the worse of the game, and yet ran out winners by 2 goals to nil. The other results were:—Queen's Park Rangers 2, Brighton 0; Plymouth 1, Southampton 0; Watford 3, Norwich City 1; Reading 2, Crystal Palace 0; Stoke 1, Brentford (h) 0; Exeter 0, Coventry 0.