

# FOOTBALL.

## LUTON IN THE WEST COUNTRY

### Failure to take their Chances in the Second Half at Bristol.

#### Another Southern League Defeat

It had been hoped that all the invalids would be sufficiently recovered to make the journey to Bristol on Saturday, but after consultation with the club doctor it was decided to give Stansfield another week's rest. With Walker back naturally Streeton dropped out, but the left wing and centre were re-arranged, Johnson being given a chance in the middle and Lashbrooke went outside, thus allowing Moody to resume his old position. Bristol had out their usual side except at outside left, where they were giving a trial to a local amateur player named Hughes. Like Luton they have done none too well at home. Indeed, previous to Saturday, only one game had been won at Stapleton-road, although they claim to have enjoyed the better of each game, particularly that with Queen's Park Rangers when they lost by two clear goals.

The day was almost an ideal one for football, but the crowd would not number more than 5,000 when the teams turned out as set out below:—

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

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

Referee, Mr. J. H. Bailey, Leicester.

The Rovers won the toss and were first dangerous. A miskick by Bushell gave Peplow a chance to make tracks towards goal, and the Rovers' winger was very smart in getting down the field with the ball. Potts dashed into the fray, but Hughes just managed to give him the slip, and it looked a likely opening until Wightman came to the rescue and succeeded in heading the ball clear. This was followed up with another attack, and Jones tried a sharp shot from a nice position only his aim was not true enough, and the ball travelled a yard or so wide of the upright. Keeping up the pressure, Potts in attempting to clear was compelled to concede a corner, for all the inside forwards were right on top of him, and he could not get the ball clear otherwise. This was well placed by Peplow, and Hughes almost opened the scoring with a good attempt just under the bar, but Naisby got to the ball and saved the situation in fine style.

It will be gathered that at this stage the Rovers were well on top, and the Luton defenders were hardly worked. Therefore, it did not come as a surprise to find the homesters a goal to the good seven minutes after the start, although there was an element of luck about the actual scoring. Jones took a pot shot at goal from some twenty yards' range, which did not promise to give cause for anxiety, for it travelled straight to Naisby, but on getting this away the Luton goalkeeper did not manage to clear far enough. The ball was promptly returned, and a regular scramble for possession took place right under the bar without either one of the players getting it under control until it came to the amateur outside-left, who was right under the bar near the farther upright to Naisby. He could not have missed scoring unless he had deliberately turned round and kicked the ball down the field—and this he did not do!



The first real Luton attack came after the restart, Lashbrooke getting in a good centre, only to find Roney at home, and the referee promptly pulled Walker up for charging the local custodian when not virtually holding the ball. Doubtless he was correct in this decision, but it is equally true Naisby was charged more than once during the scramble when the Rovers netted their goal, but in this case the game was allowed to go on, to the undoing of Luton's chances. Having got over the opening attacks on the part of the home players, Luton now took a more equal share of the game, and Bob Hawkes all but equalised with a very fine effort, following a good centre from Brown. The ball went low and sure towards the goal, and it appeared certain to find the net, but Roney, although falling down, just managed to prevent its passage over the line, and was heartily cheered for a really grand save. A goal at this stage would have been nothing more than was deserved, and its influence on the game would have been tremendous. But Luton appear to be passing through an unlucky period, and a sudden break-away by Peplow was crowned by another goal to the Rovers. The Rovers' crack winger worked towards the goal, and Bushell tackled him, but could not prevent him getting in a cross shot which flew into the net at a terrific pace. Both players went down, but Peplow was soon on his feet again to receive the congratulations of his comrades. Bushell was not so fortunate, and it was several minutes before the game could be resumed, and then it was without Bushell being able to take up his position. After restarting the ball from the centre Johnson dropped back to centre-half, but Bushell was only off the field about five minutes, and nothing of any moment occurred during his absence.

Ten minutes before the interval Luton's persistent efforts were rewarded by a goal. The ball coming to Walker some distance down the field he burst through in fine style, and with both backs standing widely apart he had a clear course for goal. Roney seeing he had no chance of saving except to dash out made a gallant attempt to get to Walker, but the Luton player held the ball with splendid judgment until Roney was within a yard or so, and then quietly transferred it to Moody, who was following up behind. Bert had no one between himself and the net, but being rather a distance away took the ball a few yards nearer before actually shooting. In the meantime Brogan had fallen back, and actually reached the ball, but he could only turn it further into the net. The only thrilling incident after this before the interval was a sudden attack by the Rovers, which caused Naisby to leave his charge to repel. This he did by pushing the ball over the line for a corner kick. This almost led up to another goal, but Naisby just managed to catch the ball under the cross bar and finally clear from danger. Thus the score at half-time was:—

Bristol Rovers 2, Luton 1.

Luton were quickly on the war path after the change of ends. A pass from Johnson sent Walker away in fine style, and he wound up with a good attempt, which travelled at a good rate just over the bar. This was followed up by another sharp attack, and Moody sent in a hot drive which gave Roney a good deal of trouble to get rid of. Indeed, the situation was only saved by the referee awarding the Rovers a free kick when Johnson, running on in his enthusiasm, charged into the



home goalkeeper. A rather wild kick by Potts went for a corner, and Naisby cleared this with difficulty, but as a rule it was all Luton now, and the spectators were by no means pleased at the prospect.

In heading the ball Walker came into collision with one of the Rovers' players, and went down injured. The game had to be stopped for the attendance of Lawson, but fortunately it was not Walker's old injury, and he did not leave the field. The referee was very smart on offside whenever a Luton player was the least shade the wrong side of the backs, and this spoilt several promising openings. Still, it seemed only a question as to how long the home defence would be able to hold out, and when Brown, slipping through cleverly, passed the ball to Walker with no one but Roney in front of him the goal seemed a certainty to fall. But Walker in his effort to "blind" the home goalkeeper, made a wild attempt, and the ball travelled yards too high. It was the let off of the game, and the crowd chuckled mightily.

There was still ten minutes to go, and even now there was a chance for at least a point. Another attack by the visiting left wing promised to bring this desirable result along, for the ball went hard and true to Walker from Lashbrooke's centre, but in trying to head the ball Bobby got just a shade too far under it, and just missed the bar. This was a far better attempt than the one previously recorded, but none the less tantalising for that. The final opportunity came when Lashbrooke took a corner kick in the last minute of the game, but his effort was lamentably weak, the ball landing among the spectators at the back of the goal, and once more Luton failed to earn anything tangible, the final whistle finding the half-time score unaltered:—

Bristol Rovers 2, Luton 1.

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## COMMENTS ON THE PLAY AND PLAYERS.

For twenty minutes everything pointed to a pronounced win for the Rovers, but after this Luton were the superior combination. This was more notable in the second half, and the local spectators were very pleased to find their defenders capable of maintaining a clean sheet after the interval. Sufficient "openings" were secured by the Luton forwards to have won the game comfortably, and with all the respect which is due to them for forcing them, some blame must be attached for their failure to improve upon the work put in in mid-field.

Naisby did well on the whole. Indeed, unless he could be blamed for not getting the ball clear from Jones's original shot when the first goal was scored he never made a mistake. Wightman had quite an easy afternoon with the amateur winger opposed to him, and was on top all through. Potts had a much more difficult customer to attend to in Peplow, but came through with credit, while the half-back line all did well, with Bob Hawkes the most in evidence.



The forward work was very fine at times, and now that Walker has succeeded in getting through a game without breaking down this should improve matters considerably, although there will have to be a decided improvement in shooting. Johnson hustled about in the centre, but was unfortunate in getting offside so much. When he gets a bit more used to the position this fault should be remedied. Lashbrooke did very well on the extreme wing, but if he cannot place corners better it will be as well if one of the others players are entrusted with the taking of them. When the final award of this nature was about to be taken in the closing minutes of the game more than one spectator just in front of the Press box was willing to give odds he put the ball behind, and the actual kick quite justified this opinion, it being about the poorest attempt it has been the writer's lot to witness.

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Like Luton, the Rovers are lamenting that they cannot get a reliable centre-forward. When they secured Jones last season they thought they had solved the problem, but his form this season has been very disappointing, and goals do not come along so often as the local officials think they should do. Peplow was the star artist, with Richards a good second, but most of the latter's work was thrown away on account of his partner being out of his class. In defence there was no really weak spot. It would be classed as sound without being brilliant in any individual case. The fact that they kept the scoring down to a single goal is a creditable achievement taking the game through.

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#### MORE SUGGESTIONS FOR THE DIRECTORS.

Our post-bag has brought us another expression of opinion upon the Luton Town team. "W. C." writes to congratulate the Town Directors upon playing Streeton in the match with Southampton. "Though, of course, it would not be fair to judge any player on such a day, I believe, under anything like favourable conditions, he will prove to be a scoring forward," says our correspondent, who goes on to give as his choice for the forward line the following: — Walker, Streeton, Shepherd, Moody and Stansfield. "Walker's general work is very good, but does not perhaps suggest goals," continues the writer, "and he would probably be an improvement in the outside right position. At the moment of writing I do not know the reason of his absence, but I should certainly play him. I would also humbly suggest to the powers that be that Johnson ought to be the first reserve. He is a consistent scorer, and that is the thing that counts. The other part of the team is, I think, satisfactory, and in conclusion I must say that although the team has met with poor success this season I believe every man to have been a thorough trier."

We desire it to be clearly understood that the publication of these and other letters does not, of necessity, indicate our concurrence in the views expressed.