

SATURDAY'S FOOTBALL.

Luton put up another Good Show Away.

Goals by Moody and Johnson Disallowed.

Reading so far possess an unbeaten certificate at home, but this record was almost lost on Saturday, when Luton, for the third match in succession, turned out without any change in the constitution of the team. Indeed it was advertised that both teams were absolutely at full strength, which is not often the case at such an advanced period of the season. Many of the names of the Reading side are quite unfamiliar, but they have proved themselves a formidable combination at home, their three goals victory over Northampton being a specially fine performance. The Reading defence has not been changed the whole season, and whenever their amateur inside-right has been able to assist the front rank also has been constituted as against Luton. Notwithstanding this comparative success their gates have proved very disappointing, the gate against Plymouth the previous week being under £90, while on Saturday it fell to £59 7s. 9d. It is true the weather was not very inviting for outdoor recreation, but even Luton crowds have not fallen off to this extent fortunately.

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The names of the players were as follows:—

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

Reading:—Caldwell; Smith and Bartholomew; H. P. Slatter, E. Hanney and Bradley; Lee, W. G. Bailey, Foster, Andrews, and Greer.

Referee, Mr. R. Horrocks.

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Reading commenced in whirlwind fashion, and for the opening ten minutes almost ran the Luton defenders off their legs. Greer was the first to threaten Naisby's charge, but this effort only resulted in a corner kick. Andrews had a fine chance to score immediately after, but failed badly, and then Luton had a look in. The ball was carried down with a rush, and Bob Hawkes put in a teaser, which Caldwell did finely to get away. But this was but a temporary diversion, and Lee tried a long shot, which went just over, and then from a second corner Andrews placed it wide. Eventually Luton wore down the tearful tactics of their opponents, and the play was more equally divided, Walker putting over on one occasion. But something better came along a minute or so later when Stansfield put in a fine centre, which Johnson cleverly headed into the net, only to have what was certainly a good goal disallowed for offside.

In claiming this as a good point the Luton crew was backed up by the home officials, but the referee judged differently, and the Luton players were evidently very sore about it. Still this did not affect their play, and they were at this stage the better team. Fifteen minutes after the start disaster, however, came by the aid of a penalty kick against Bob Hawkes. Even if the official ruling was the correct one it was extremely hard lines, for there was no danger of a goal, and the ball appeared to strike the Luton captain rather than he to strike the ball. As a matter of fact the referee, who was close up, did not consider it a penalty until one of the linesmen signalled to him. The taking of the kick was entrusted to Bartholomew, who sent in a terrific drive, which Naisby just managed to touch but could not prevent entering the net.

Hands close in against Reading spelt danger after this, but Johnson shot over, and then at the opposite end Lee put in a swift attempt, which went just wide, the Reading player being bowled over by Wightman almost at the same moment. There is no doubt the Reading winger was conscious of the presence of Wightman at the moment he took his aim, and this probably saved Luton's record. A long punt from Smith caused the home forwards to get away, and the ball coming to Lee, that player shot into the net, but the whistle had just previously gone for offside, and therefore Naisby made no effort to stop the shot. Luton came straight away from the goal kick, and Moody hooked Stansfield's centre by Caldwell. But once more the referee vetoed the score. This was an even worse decision than his former one, when Johnson's goal was disallowed.

The Reading forwards were continually infringing the offside law, and the local crowd did not at all relish some of these decisions, although they were not so eager to complain when the two Luton goals were knocked off. The home goal had a narrow escape when Caldwell had to run out for Walker, who secured the ball, headed towards what appeared an open goal, but somehow Smith had fallen behind, and to the relief and great surprise of the crowd saved what looked a certain goal by kicking the ball clear. Caldwell was fairly bombarded near the interval, and once in particular was only relieved through the referee

W stopping the game and awarding a free kick to the home side—apparently for dangerous play, for Caldwell was hugging the ball and therefore could be legitimately charged. But try as they would Johnson and Co. could not manage to alter the score up to half-time, although it was readily admitted Reading were extremely lucky to possess the lead at this stage.

Reading 1, Luton 0.

at For a minute or so after the resumption Reading were on the attack, but Naisby picked up a pass forward from Foster, and just later offside against the same player spoilt a chance following Lee's centre. At the other end Caldwell's charge was once again saved by the referee penalising the Luton forwards for paying too intimate attentions to the goalkeeper, although as in the first half, he was actually in possession of the ball. The exchanges were fast becoming pretty vigorous, and Hanney was temporarily knocked out. This gave the Luton forwards a bit more room to work in, and Bartholomew, running too far forward to cover up the deficiency, was rounded by Brown, who slung the ball into the centre, for Johnson to head the equalising point.

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It was now a battle royal, and the players were none too scrupulous in their methods, it being no uncommon thing to see three players stretched full length on the turf. The spectators did their utmost to rouse the local players, but having now got their chance to secure a League point, the Luton players were not going to give up their advantage without an effort. In the hurly-burly which ensued Potts was laid out, and had to be carried off. Jack certainly looked ill while Lawson was attending him by the side of the fence, but fortunately he was not seriously injured. Just before Luton equalised Foster put through the Luton goal, but he was so obviously offside the spectators did not complain, while they were much relieved when Moody was pulled up for the same reason in the act of heading towards goal. Play was certainly exciting, but both sets of defenders managed to prevent any further score, the final whistle going with the score—

Luton 1, Reading 1.

COMMENT ON THE PLAY AND PLAYERS.

Luton were good value for a win. This was readily conceded by the home officials, one of whom remarked at the finish that "he could quite understand Luton's position on the table if they always encountered such vile luck as at Reading." Naisby, who was always a favourite at Reading, kept his charge in good style, for he cannot be blamed for allowing a penalty kick to beat him. Wightman and Potts, after a shaky opening, settled down finely, while Bob Hawkes maintained his grand form of the present season, and his fine footwork was much admired. Forward everyone tried their hardest to break the spell of ill-luck which has attended Luton this season, and the fact that they forced the ball into the net thrice speaks well for them, especially as Reading had only had four goals scored against them in the previous nine matches at home.

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Reading were best served by Smith, who is one of the finest defenders in the Southern League, and has quite recovered from the effect of his broken leg a couple of seasons ago. His partner is a thorough trier, but not of the same class as his captain. Like Luton, most local criticism is directed against the forwards, and judging from their display of last Saturday this is quite justified, for they did not compare favourably in any particular with the Luton five.