

LUTON FOOTBALL NOTES.

By "The Goalie."

SOUTHERN LEAGUE.

THE TURNING OF THE TIDE.

LUTON DRAW AT READING.

When things are bad it is only a remarkably healthy specimen of the genus philosopher who can find satisfaction in the reflection that they might have been worse. That, however, was the only crumb of comfort left us about the beginning of this month, and after the home defeat administered by Plymouth, our spirits were at a very low ebb. Then Luton went to Swindon, who, laughing up their sleeves at their pigmy opponents, prepared to improve their goal average. As a matter of fact, however, they were quite satisfied to snatch the two points after one of the toughest fights of the season, and Luton came home full of glory and, better still, of hope for the future. The next match was again away from home, and against old friends at Reading. The latter team have secured a respectable position on the League table, but Luton were undaunted, and after a good game, made a draw of one goal each.

This partial success should be a big encouragement to the team for their match on Saturday, when Northampton, fresh from their triumph over the champions, visit Strawopolis. I fancy that Luton will win, and they should certainly pick up two more points at the expense of Watford on Christmas Day. On Boxing Day, the Hertfordshire team will be the hosts, and anything may happen then. A lot depends on how the Luton men keep clear of injuries, for a good Christmas would extricate them from their low position and set them climbing the League table.

Reading, in drawing with Luton at Elm-park at 1 goal each, were, even in the opinion of the home critics, extremely lucky. The local forwards never combined, and what is even worse never seemed to have the ability to do so. They were ragged in the extreme. There was but one goal scored in the opening half of the game, and Reading were credited with it, Bob Hawkes handling the ball in a most flagrant manner. Bartholomew, Reading's general utility man, was entrusted with the kick, and he put the ball into the net all right, though Naisby got his fingers to it en route. It was in the second half when Johnson equalised for the visitors.

Smith, the Reading captain, played a very sound game at back, and Bartholomew, if not as polished, also did well. Caldwell, in goal, was great. The halves opened weakly, but improved as time went on; Slatter was the best of them, even though Hanney and Bradley worked very hard indeed. Lee, the home outside right, was given very few opportunities, but on occasion he came through with flying colours. Bailey was a very enterprising worker, and Foster was responsible for a lot of good work. The remaining players of the home team were not up to expectations. Like Caldwell, Naisby did well between the sticks; his backs, however, did not impress one. The visitors' half-back line was clever. When Bob Hawkes made his mistake, he must have wondered and worried; his play subsequently was, however, so superb that even his mistake must be overlooked. Johnson was a rare good pivot, and Brown and Walker on the one side of him and Moody and Stansfield on the other completed quite a nice line of forwards.

The football was generally interesting, play at times being most exciting. Each club had full strength doing duty, and each went for all it was capable. Reading opened very strongly indeed, and succeeding brilliant work on the part of Foster and Lee, forced what proved to be a fruitless corner. A moment later Reading took another corner, but so great was the defensive work of Luton that the locals could not get through. Then for some minutes the visitors took the game in hand, and Walker and Brown were extremely dangerous. Slatter, Hanney, and Bradley, however, never faltered, and eventually the visitors were forced to beat a retreat.

In their turn, Reading became very aggressive, and Lee and Foster were repeatedly cheered for clever work. From a strong attack, Bob Hawkes handled in a most deliberate manner, and quite properly a penalty kick was conceded to the home side. This was entrusted to Bartholomew, who registered a nice goal, despite the fact that Naisby got his hand to the ball. A smart attack by Luton followed, and in turn Caldwell and Smith saved the situation for Reading. Many exciting incidents succeeded, with Luton for the most part pressing without equalising and at the interval Reading led by 1 goal to 0.

The second half was more or less a repetition of the first. Reading opened very well, but they could not sustain their effort, and Luton were frequently dangerous and but for the watchfulness and cleverness of Caldwell, Smith, and Bartholomew, they would have equalised sooner than they did. The point, on the run of the play, was bound to come, and a quarter of an hour before the finish, succeeding a fine combination on the part of the visitors' forwards, Johnson had the satisfaction of placing Luton on an equality. The subsequent work was of a very even character, and Caldwell at one end and Naisby at the other were busy. Result:—

READING 1, LUTON 1.