

FROSTY FOOTBALL.

Luton and Brentford Share League Points.

Ninety Minutes on Snow and Ice without a Goal.

Description and Comments by "Vigilant."

Out of the Cup, Luton Town's consolation on the second cup-tie day of the year was a struggle for Southern League points with old cup rivals in Brentford. The players of both sides would, I guess, have been better pleased if their opponents had still been engaged in the Cup competition, for it was no joking matter to have to turn out in the Arctic conditions which prevailed. With its carpet of white, relieved only by the cleared patches necessary to enable the requisite lines to be marked out, the playing pitch presented a scene of unusual loveliness. But it was a picture which could have no charm for the players. The consistent frosts of the past week had firmly bound the snow together, and thus giving an added treacherousness to a surface which was as hard as iron. The conditions were, in fact, altogether more in keeping with skating than football, and if the spectators did not witness a game of ice football they certainly witnessed football on ice. Youngsters would have revelled in an afternoon's sliding on the pitch, and the players had plenty of it—though it cannot be said they revelled in it, for falls on such a terrifically hard ground were calculated to be attended with rather serious results.

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It would not have been surprising to have heard the referee declare the ground unfit for a match in which League points were at stake, but Mr. W. E. Russell, of Swindon, took the course of allowing the game to proceed, and of indicating very clearly in quite the opening stages his intention of putting down anything like foul or even vigorous play. He had no trouble in doing this, for, though the players forgot themselves here and there, generally there was little disposition to take many risks. Under the circumstances, no one could grumble at either the result or the game. Making all allowances for the slips that were bound to occur on the ice and snow-coated turf, the game was a very interesting one, containing just about enough incident to make enthusiastic spectators forget all about the cold. I say enthusiastic, because the folks who stood about in the cold on such a biting afternoon could not have been other than enthusiasts. At the same time, I imagine the three thousand or so present must all have been non-skaters for, if there was no skating in Luton, there was plenty of good ice in the neighbouring district, and I cannot believe there are skaters who would spend their Saturday afternoon freezing at a football match in preference to warming themselves at the exhilarating pastime of skating.

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HOW THE GAME WENT.

Stansfield was still out of the home side, which was the same as unluckily lost at Coventry, and Brentford, who are one of the teams in the League who have all their work cut out to avert relegation, brought the best side they have available for the moment, as Hamilton, the back, has only just sufficiently recovered from injuries to take a place in the reserves' side, while Graham was on the suspended list. It was the same team as failed at Exeter the previous week, the full list of players being:—

Luton:—Naisby; Wightman and Potts; Fred Hawkes, Bushell and R. M. Hawkes; Brown, Walker, Streeton, Moody, and Stephenson.

Brentford:—Ling; Rhodes and Spratt; A. Barclay, Hickleton and Kennedy; Brawn, Rouse, Hippon, Hendren, and Anderson.

There were three or four of the Luton players who did not take at all kindly to the idea of playing in rubber-barred boots, but they hardly got on to the field before they realised it was a necessary evil, and the result was the homesters had to start the game without Bushell. It would have been wretched luck had this fact resulted in Luton being early faced with a goal deficit, and it might easily have done so, for Brentford twice got away, and both Rippon and Hendren took early opportunities to pot—at long range, certainly, but still well on the spot. But the danger was averted all right by Naisby, and with matters settling down the Blues carried the hostilities to the other end of the field. They were playing very well indeed, in spite of the handicap represented by the hard and slippery surface, and it was from an exhilarating movement that Streeton went very near with a capital shot. This was followed almost immediately by a fine piece of work which, fortunately for the visitors, was lacking in the necessary finish. Moody and Streeton went through, to be dispossessed when they got to shooting range. Walker, however, recovered the ball on the line well out towards the wing, and in the cleverest possible way hooked it back to his partner. But Brown's centre was too much on the oblique for the forwards to make use of it, and Bob Hawkes could only put wide.

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Brentford found the Luton attack very persistent, and it was well for them, for the conditions were against effective work in front of goal. Walker was unlucky to have a shot beaten down when he seemed to be in good scoring position, and the visitors had an even more fortunate escape directly after. Stephenson and Moody went down in irresistible style, and Moody shot hard and true along the slippery surface for the opposite post. It was quite a characteristic effort, and seemed odds on scoring, but Ling proved very sure-footed, and just reached the ball with outstretched leg, and was able to kick it out. Brown recovered on the right wing, and centred well, but first Walker had his shot beaten down, and then Bob Hawkes let drive at a terrific pace, only to find a defender once more in the way.

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When Brentford at last managed to break away Naisby had a hot shot from Brawn to deal with, but generally the goalkeepers had little chance of keeping themselves warm. Luton were for the most part outplaying Brentford in midfield, and though it was not exactly novel to find them lacking in front of goal, it must be admitted it was not to be wondered at in this particular game. Once Fred Hawkes was prominent with a smart burst through on his own, but the ground played donkey tricks with the ball just as he shot and caused him to be out of it with his aim. Ling quite enjoyed the fortune of the gods in another instance, when he punched out a high shot from Bushell directly on to the head of one of his backs. Moody took the rebound and headed in, and Ling happened to be just on the spot to receive it!

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Bob Hawkes was generally exhibiting how football may be played, even under treacherous conditions, and his inside forwards were sent clean through several times as a result of his judicious ground passes straight ahead. But there was no

disposition on the part of the front men to court vigorous upsets in the penalty area, and at long potting they did not at all shine. Luton's last scoring chance of the half was when Bob Hawkes took up a centre from Stephenson so admirably that Walker was given a capital opening. He shot promptly, and there was any amount of powder behind the ball, but a defender barred the way, and Walker could only send outside from the rebound. For the last few minutes all the danger was round the home goal, and the spectators were much relieved when, after Naisby had knocked the ball into the air and Wightman had clean miskicked, Tommy managed to get the ball away. Naisby had two other nasty ones to deal with. One was a long pot, which shot like lightning after it touched the snow, and another was a header by Rippon from Brawn's centre, which Tommy saved with considerable smartness, cleverly eluding Rouse before a free-kick award against the Brentford forward obviated the necessity of a clearance. Thus the teams left for the warmth of the dressing rooms with the score sheet showing—

Luton 0, Brentford 0.

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Brentford were on top for some minutes after the resumption, but, as in the first half, Luton quickly evened up matters, and in the end became the more aggressive. Stephenson shot hard into Ling's hands, and Bob Hawkes had a hot shot handled just outside the penalty area, but Wightman's free kick took no effect. The half was less than a quarter of an hour old when Streeton had the chance of the game—and missed it. Moody fed Brown, and the centre from the outside-right, directed for the goal line, left Streeton with only the goalkeeper to beat, but the ball skimmed off his head outside.

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Brentford's efforts to get away were splendidly nullified by the consistently sound work of the Luton backs, and from a dashing run and brilliant centre by Stephenson, Walker just headed wide. The dash the home attack were infusing into their work excited the enthusiasm of the crowd, and urged on by this demonstrative outburst on the part of their supporters, the Blues put on a deal of very hard pressure. There were many exciting moments round the Brentford goal, but so far from the game being at all one-sided, the visitors in their turn became most aggressive, and generally there was no lack of incident.

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Naisby had no little difficulty in turning over the bar a high long-range shot from Barclay, and Rippon headed over from the corner kick. Directly afterwards Naisby made a couple of catches which would have aroused loud cheers at a Test cricket match. The first was from Brawn, and when he threw out he placed the ball at the foot of Barclay, and took the right half's shot close to the ground as he ran across the goal. Streeton aroused enthusiasm by the admirable way he steered the ball out to Brown. The outside-right's centre found the head of one of the backs. Walker gained possession from the rebound, but was robbed, and Moody came to the rescue only to fire his shot over when almost under the bar.

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This was another fortunate escape for the visitors, though Moody could hardly be blamed, for he never had the opportunity of getting the ball under control, and it was quite a chance effort, and there was a further one when the referee penalised Brentford for a foul on Brown, but astonished the Luton players by ruling it outside the penalty area. The free kick led to a good deal of scrimmaging in the goal-mouth before Ling was able to fist away. Directly afterwards Brown returned with a swinging centre, and Streeton blazed away at goal, for Ling to bring off a magnificent save. Then we had more scrimmaging, and when the ball came out clear Bob Hawkes landed in a high shot, which Ling fisted out. Streeton returned with his head, but again Ling was on the spot. These incidents made the last five minutes really exciting, and Brentford certainly owed it to Ling that the score at the end was still

Luton 0, Brentford 0.