

Southern League.

LUTON v. BRENTFORD.

Played at Luton on Saturday. Result :—

Luton	nil.
Brentford	nil.

The teams were as follow :—

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

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

Referee, Mr. W. E. Russell (Swindon).

If gate receipts were not a very important matter in connection with League football, there would have been very few matches played under the conditions that prevailed on Saturday, for with the ground frozen and slightly covered with snow, it was practically impossible to play the game properly. Apart from the difficulty of controlling the ball, there were serious risks involved, and the players had to think of themselves as well as the matter of goal-getting.

Bitterly cold as it was, one could hardly be surprised at seeing less than three thousand people present on the Luton ground, and most of those who turned out must have wondered, long before the finish, whether it would not have been better to seek enjoyment elsewhere. The result shows that there was very little to enthuse about, and apart from the fact that no goals were scored, the play itself was anything but thrilling.

The game opened very tamely, but Luton were the first to attack. Streeton, after some fairly good work by the forwards, was presented with an opening, but his shot went wide. A few minutes later, however, he had really hard luck with a good shot, the ball missing the upright by inches only. Luton continued to press, but the forwards were slow in shooting, and Brentford eventually got away, but their effort was very weak, and Wightman had no difficulty in clearing. Following some uninteresting midfield play, Fred Hawkes obtained possession, and after beating two or three men, he sent in a shot which travelled but a few inches wide.

The Luton left wing next became prominent, Stephenson taking the ball down the wing and centreing to Moody, who, without wasting any time, shot. The ball travelled towards the far corner of the net, and Ling only just managed to get to it and clear.

After this, the Brentford forwards got away, and this time their effort was a little more dangerous, but Naisby brought off a clever save from a shot by Brawn, the outside-right. Their attack was not of long duration, and the Luton forwards once more took the ball down the field towards the visitors' goal. Brown sent in one or two centres, but they went begging. Walker next tried his luck with a shot, and Ling had some difficulty in saving.

It was about this point that Bushell was hurt in a tussle with the inside-right, but he was soon able to resume. Luton continued to have the better of the exchanges, but the inability of the forwards to turn the openings which came their way to account resulted in no goals being scored.

The second half opened in favour of Luton, but Stephenson's centre went wide. Brown next came along with a good shot, but Ling was not to be easily beaten, and the custodian cleared in fine style. The forwards continued to press, however, and Ling was called upon several times in quick succession to save shots from Walker and Moody. The Brentford forwards, after some clever combination, attacked the Luton goal in earnest. The principal figure in this attack was Rouse, who sent in a very difficult shot, which, however, Naisby succeeded in reaching, and he brought off a smart save.

Rouse soon obtained possession again, and once more Naisby brought off a brilliant save. The left wing next became prominent, and the inside-left sent in a shot which travelled just wide. For some minutes Brentford continued to harass the Luton defence, but the backs eventually triumphed, and the Luton forwards got well away. Brown on the right wing put in some clever work, and from one of his centres Streeton was given the chance of a lifetime. He was standing almost under the bar when the centre came across, but to the surprise of everyone he headed behind. It was indeed a bad miss.

For a few minutes the Brentford forwards struggled to force play into the Luton half, but their efforts met with little success, and the Luton front string were once more surrounding the visitors' goal. Here Moody sent in a shot which Ling, although he managed to save, failed to clear effectively, and Walker immediately sent in a shot. The goalkeeper was, however, prepared, and he reached the ball, but again he failed to clear effectively, and a header from Streeton almost found the net. One of the backs eventually succeeded in kicking away, but Bob Hawkes returned the ball with a brilliant shot, and this time Ling brought off a very fine save.

Towards the close the Brentford forwards got away, but the inside-right was a little wild in his shooting, and the ball travelled wide. In the last minute Luton pressed, and a shot from Stephenson almost scored, Ling bringing off a magnificent save. Just as the custodian saved, the final whistle sounded, and the game ended in a draw of no goals.

Reputations were neither made nor marred in the course of the game, and it would be ridiculous, under the circumstances, to criticise individual players. With the chances they had, however, the Luton forwards ought to have scored, and the fact that they did not do so must be attributed to that lack of judgment which has been such an unfortunate characteristic of their play this season.

Owing to the Cup-ties, there were only three other Southern League games on Saturday, and, curious'y enough, these all resulted in draws. Norwich City drew at Stoke and New Brompton at Millwall, the score in each case being one goal all, while Exeter City made a goalless draw with the Rangers at Park Royal.

In the Cup-ties, the most surprising result was that on the Aston Villa ground, where Reading drew at one goal all. Northampton obtained a similar result at Darlington, and West Ham at Middlesbrough, whilst Sunderland made a goalless draw at the Crystal Palace. Swindon beat Notts County by 2 goals to nil, but at Coventry, Manchester United beat the City by 5 goals to 1, and at Bradford, Portsmouth were beaten by 2 goals to nil.

On Saturday next, the Luton team will be playing at Leyton, whilst the Reserves will be at home to Leyton Reserves.

Luton have suffered very much from injuries to players recently, and this has been specially felt by the Reserves. It is a remarkable thing that of the five forwards who were doing so well in the Reserve team before Christmas, not one is available for them to-day. Stephenson and Streeton have been pressed into service for the first team, Conquest has returned to the Clarence, and Lashbrooke and Shepherd are on the injured list.

Lashbrooke has not played for five weeks. He twisted his knee when playing against the Arsenal Reserves, and has not been able to turn out since. Shepherd, after five weeks' rest, went to Tunbridge Wells on Saturday, but though he played to the finish, he could not go to Chelsea on Monday. Mardle sprained his ankle at Tunbridge, and was therefore incapacitated on Monday. Stansfield's injury, I am sorry to hear, is more serious than was at first thought, and he is not likely to be fit for several weeks. Johnson, who was at Saturday's match at Luton on crutches, is making satisfactory progress, but it is hardly likely that he will play again this season.

A.M. is informed that Luton played against Bristol City in the Southern League, but never in the Second Division of the English League, as Bristol City did not join that League until after Luton had returned to the Southern League.