

LUTON FOOTBALL NOTES.

By "The Goalie."

SOUTHERN LEAGUE.

SINKING DEEPER.

DISHEARTENED TEAM LOSE TO SWINDON

No one was surprised, and no one will blame the Luton team for losing to Swindon on Saturday. Not only were the visitors the best team in the South, and all out for the championship, but the tragic death of Wightman was bound to have its effect on the team, who were in mourning, and played like it. A reference to the touching tribute paid to the deceased is dealt with in another column, but I cannot pass on to deal with the game without first adding to the many expressions of sympathy how grieved I was to hear that the large-hearted bustling back had passed away. As a player he was absolutely fearless and always a trier, and the value of his friendship may be judged from the effect his loss has had upon his comrades. Saturday's game makes Luton's chance of escaping relegation small indeed, for with New Brompton drawing at the Palace, the position is as follows:—

	P.	W.	L.	D.	F.	A.	P.
Brentford	35	10	16	9	55	63	29
Southampton	35	9	15	11	43	38	29
New Brompton	35	9	17	9	31	69	27
Luton	36	8	18	10	42	59	26
Leyton	36	6	19	11	26	61	23

It will be seen that New Brompton have to play one game more than Luton, and are already a point to the good. There is a gleam of hope ahead in the fact that the Kent team have still to play Swindon at home, their other matches being Southampton (home) and Plymouth (away). They will probably only secure two points (at the expense of the Saints) in these three matches, and if Luton can defeat Reading at home on Saturday and draw with Northampton away the following week they will escape by their superior goal average. There is just a chance, therefore, and I for one have not quite lost hope. There has been a great deal of speculation as to what will happen if Luton finish in the bottom pair, and the Second Division falls through. The Southern League can hardly break faith with the clubs who have qualified for promotion, and they will then probably do what they did before, viz., increase the membership of the League to 22.

It would be unfair to criticise the players on Saturday's game, for though they tried to pull themselves together, they could not lift the weight of memory, and as Swindon must secure every possible point if they wish to retain the championship, the game was a foregone conclusion. At the last moment, Luton obtained a player to fill poor Wightman's place in S. Brown, of Millwall Reserves, and it is pleasing that Luton's old friends and rivals should have done them such a good turn in the hour of need. Brown acquitted himself very well, being a safe tackler and a cool kicker. The Swindon team is exceptionally well balanced, being as strong in defence as attack. The two backs, Walker and Kay, always had the Luton quintette in hand, and it was only on rare occasions that Skiller had to bestir himself. The personality of the roving Fleming was missed from the forward line, but Burkinshaw made a capable substitute. Tout was another absentee, while on the Luton side, Moody played centre in place of Walden, who was injured. Lashbrooke took Bert's place, and as Streeton was also unfit, Bobbie Waker reappeared in his old place at inside right.

The game opened very quietly until a fine centre from Walker, who played splendidly in the first half, gave Luton's insides a glorious opportunity, which was lost through unsteadiness. Some good defensive work by the new back soon made him a favourite, especially as it initiated a promising attacking movement, during which Skiller made a sensational save from Ernie Brown. Up to this Swindon had had rather the best of it, but Luton were going strongly now, and Bob Hawkes hit the bar with a beauty. Magnificent kicking changed the venue, but for once, the Swindon sharpshooters were off the target. It was a very close go, however, when Naisby fumbled a header from Lamb, but in the mix-up which followed the ball was luckily cleared. A Luton revival saw Moody head the ball wide by inches only, and a moment later the Swindon goal was bombarded from all points. Luck was against the home team, however, and the ball being cleared, Lamb beat Naisby three minutes from the interval after the goalkeeper had run out in a futile attempt to reach the ball first.

No sooner had the game been re-started than Swindon scored again, Bown taking advantage of a muddle in the home defence to slip through and score. This was not the worst, however, for a minute later Lamb drove the ball into the net from nearly forty yards' range with one of the best shots I have ever seen. Ignoring the interval, the three goals had all been scored in the space of about five minutes. These reverses appeared to take the sting out of Luton, and Swindon seemed likely to add to the score at any moment, Lamb's shooting being little less than wonderful. The only part of the home team to shine was the over-worked half-back line, Bob Hawkes being an outstanding figure as usual. After a time, Swindon slackened up, and Luton had most of the game, but they could make very little impression on the visitors' defence. The most likely attempt to score was made by Bert Moody, who headed for Skiller to save grandly, and even when a penalty was awarded, no one was surprised when Bushell fired it over the bar. It was not Luton's day, and everyone was glad when the game fizzled out, with the score:—

SWINDON 3 LUTON 0