

LUTON TOWN IN MOURNING.

Swindon's Runaway Victory at a Critical Time.

BLUES' POSITION ALMOST HOPELESS.

The Luton Town players were in mourning on Saturday. Their play indicated it quite as clearly as the crepe armlets they wore in memory of a departed colleague, and seven thousand spectators were not at all surprised, if disappointed, at their defeat by Swindon. Under any circumstances it would have been no light ordeal to a team struggling hard to maintain a position in the first division of the Southern League to have to meet the redoubtable Cup semi-finalists at a time when, freed from the anxieties of cup-ties, they are all out for the retention of League championship honours, and the ordeal was attenuated by the atmosphere of gloom prevailing in local football circles. Thanks to the good offices of the Millwall Club, Wightman's place was so capably filled that his individual absence was not severely felt, but the moral effect of the loss sustained by the team was still there. The anxiety of the players to win was very pronounced, but they were obviously as upset as they were anxious, and their play suffered accordingly. Rarely, if ever, did they look like reproducing winning form. Triers they all were without a doubt, yet with all their attempts to bestir themselves and rise to the critical occasion, there was always an absence of life and devil such as could only bring about one result.

Naturally, the most keenly scrutinised of the players when the teams took the field wearing emblems of mourning was the new back secured by Luton to fill the vacancy created by Wightman's death. It is a pleasure to record the sportsmanlike act of both the Brighton and Millwall Clubs in spontaneously coming to Luton's aid in their time of trouble with an offer of the choice of their reserve backs. Luton's choice was Archibald Brown, of Millwall, a big, burly back, who rejoices in the cognomen of "Sandy," after the style of the famous forward of that name. "Sandy" is a Scotchman, who formerly played for Falkirk, and we believe this is his first season in English League football. He has figured in one or two Southern League matches for Millwall, but the Dockers are so keen on winning the Kent League that generally he has been retained for the Reserves, whom he has practically carried through on his own in defence. His services have been granted to Luton for the rest of the season, and while the very reverse of a Wightman in style, he certainly showed himself a sound defender and a very safe kick, without attempting anything in the way of brilliance. Brown was accorded a splendid reception on taking the field, and his work during the game was never allowed to pass without appreciative recognition.

The change at back was not the only one Luton were compelled to make as a result of the disastrous Easter tour. Streeton sustained injury in both the Good Friday match at Luton and at Plymouth the following day, and as a consequence Walker, who played at Brighton, was again Brown's partner on the right. Walden was also badly damaged at Brighton, and a strain of the muscles of his thigh caused him to stand down. Moody was shifted to centre-forward, and Lashbrooke came in at inside-left, this being his last game of the season owing to his cricketing engagement. Altogether Billy Lawson must have been having a harassing time of it lately, and the end of the season will, doubtless, be cordially welcomed by him. Swindon were at full strength with the exception of the redoubtable Harold Fleming, and the not less well-known Tout, Burkinshaw partnering Jefferson on the right, with Wheatcroft in the centre and Bown and Lamb on the left.

Attacking the Town end goal in the first half Luton in the early stages flattered only to deceive. They were frequently round the Swindon goal, and often their forward work was really very clever, with the right wing excelling, but no impression could be made upon a defence which knew no flaws. Skiller early saved well from Stephenson, and brought off a magnificent stop from Brown as he fell near the post, but he also had two lucky escapes, both Moody and Lashbrooke failing to negotiate a fine chance presented by a low centre from Walker, while a brilliant drive from Bob Hawkes, which completely beat the custodian, hit the bar and went over. For quite half an hour Skiller continued to have his hands full, and on one occasion excitement was intense, as in a hot bombardment shot after shot were rained in by Moody, Bob Hawkes and Bushell, only to be beaten down, and Skiller brought the situation to an end by another clever save from Bob Hawkes.

Luton up to this point thoroughly deserved to be well ahead, though in their turn they had one extremely lucky escape. A centre by Lamb was deflected a little by Brown, and Naisby was obviously ill at ease with it, placing the goal in great danger before he managed to effect a lucky clearance. Though the Blues were having the bulk of the play, Swindon were always dangerous when they got moving, and in the last five minutes they put on the only goal of the half. It was a typical piece of Luton's ill-luck. A clearance by Potts cannoned off Bushell, and left Burkinshaw clear. His centre was right out of the way of the defence, and Naisby rushed out, but Lamb was there first, and shot into the empty goal, Brown making a fine but futile effort to keep the ball out.

Swindon increased their lead to three in the first few minutes of the second half. Almost in the first minute Bown took advantage of a muddle up in the defence to get clean through from Jefferson's centre, and Naisby once more left his charge only to fail to save the situation. Directly afterwards Lamb scored one of the most brilliant goals seen on the ground this season, driving a low oblique shot into the opposite corner of the net from nearly forty yards' range. Lamb was throughout shooting in wonderful form, and encouraged by his success gave Naisby several warm handfuls. As a matter of fact, Naisby was constantly kept on the alert for all the sting had gone out of the home attack, and there was only one team in it. Towards the end the Blues did infuse more vigour into their attack, Bob Hawkes rendering yeoman service, but the defence was mostly on top, and goals were certainly not in the Luton basket. Seven minutes from time they were awarded a penalty for hands against Chambers, but Bushell shot yards over the bar, and the game ran to a tame close with the score:—

Luton 0, Swindon 3.