

Southern League.

LUTON v. READING.

Played at Luton on Saturday. Result:—

Luton	7 goals.
Reading	1 goal.

The teams were as follow:—

Luton—Naisby; A. Brown and Potts; F. Hawkes, Bushell, and R. Hawkes; E. Brown, Walker, Mardle, Moody, and Stephenson.

Reading—Caulfield; Smith and Gibson; Smart, E. Hanney, and Bradley; Leo, W. G. Bailey, Foster, Andrews, and Greer.

Referee, Mr. R. Horrocks (Farnworth).

Despite the fine weather, there were only some four thousand spectators on the Town Ground on Saturday, but these had a surprisingly good time. With Walden and Streeton still out of the team, the directors fell back upon Mardle for the centre-forward position, and as he was apparently the last resort when all players had failed, the prospects did not look too promising.

As a matter of fact, however, from the very first Mardle shaped more like a centre-forward than any man we have had in that position this season, with the single exception, perhaps, of Johnson, who was doing so well before had the misfortune to break his leg.

But Mardle was always well up with the backs, he knew when to pass the ball and how to pass it, and he also knew when to make a dash through on his own, or in company with Moody. If Mardle has been playing for the Reserves all the season, I can only say that it is a wonderful thing that he has not been discovered before.

He is not a big man, it is true, and a clever big man is always to be preferred to a clever little one, but still, if Mardle had been tried before, I feel sure that we should have won some of the games that have been lost simply because the forwards could not score goals.

Of course, Luton's phenomenal goal-scoring on Saturday was not entirely due to Mardle's presence among the forwards. Reading, unfortunately for themselves, had a Reserve goalkeeper to take the place of Caldwell, who has just been transferred to Everton, and though he is said to have performed well with the Reserves, he certainly did not give a great exhibition in the first half against Luton.

Caulfield appeared to have little confidence in himself, and two or three of the goals were undoubtedly the result of his incapacity, but with a little luck several more might have been obtained—notably once when Stephenson hit the inside of the bar with a hot shot, and on two occasions when Mardle had beaten all opposition and then had the mortification of seeing the ball roll just outside the goal.

There was no undue slackness on the part of the Reading players generally, although they had nothing particular to play for, the result of the match making little difference to their position on the League table. But, for the most part, they were no match for the Luton players, who had as much of the game as they have of many others this season, but added to their cleverness in the field the ability to shoot.

The game calls for little in the way of detail. Bob won the toss, and gained the advantage of the breeze. Luton, from the commencement, went away strongly, and a smart attack on the Reading goal resulted in Moody heading just over. Then Greer, on the visitors' left wing, made a somewhat weak effort, and Brown had no difficulty in effectively repulsing the attack. It was from this clearance that Brown the outside-right, got away. He sent across a beautiful centre, and Mardle rather smartly baffled the defence by jumping over the ball and letting it pass out to Moody, who was standing in a fine position. Bert took the ball in a little, and then beat Caulfield with a nice shot, the goalkeeper, although just reaching the ball, failing to turn it out of the net.

A few minutes later, Mardle and Moody made a fine combined effort, as the result of which Mardle scored Luton's second goal within ten minutes of the commencement. Again breaking through the visitors' defence, a third goal was soon added, Moody scoring with a good shot. Reading, try as they would, could not make the slightest headway, and Luton continued to harass the visitors' defence. On one occasion Walker sent in a shot, and the custodian failing to gather the ball, Mardle dashed in and succeeded in robbing him, but he had the misfortune to see the ball roll the other side of the post.

It was but a few minutes after this that Stephenson, in another smart attack on the Reading citadel, hit the bar with a terrific shot. Caulfield was now showing better form, and he saved a hot shot from Moody in fine style, throwing himself the length of the goal and turning the ball round the post for a fruitless corner. Then Reading had a spell of attacking, Lee getting away on the right wing, and Potts failing to check the winger's rush, the latter put across a fine centre which was taken by Andrews, but Brown came to the rescue and cleared in clever style.

After this, Luton again took up the running, and a prolonged attack upon the Reading goal resulted in Mardle eventually scoring after Caulfield had partially saved a shot from Moody. The Reading players protested against the decision of the referee on the grounds of offside, but after consulting with the linesman, the referee did not hesitate to give Luton the point. Reading failed to improve before the interval, and in the last minute Luton attacked strongly, Stephenson forcing a corner, and from the kick Moody headed a beautiful goal. The interval thus came with Luton leading by 5 goals to nil.