

SOUTHERN LEAGUE.

DESPERATE FIGHT AT MARDY.

LUTON COMMENCE WITH A VICTORY.

BOB HAWKES AS GOAL SCORER.

Luton commenced their programme in the Second Division of the Southern League on Saturday by visiting Mardy, in Monmouthshire. This little Welsh town is rather difficult to reach, and the members of the team had to break their journey at Cardiff on Friday night, and continue in the morning. Mardy is not one of the strongest of the Welsh teams, but they can put up a stubborn fight upon their own ground, as the Lutonians found to their cost. It is true that Luton won the match by three goals to two, but it was an exceptionally keen struggle from beginning to end, and the Monmouth men played with all the zest that one is wont to associate with an English Cup-tie. Names and reputations meant nothing to Mardy, and the crowd witnessed a right royal game, in which finesse would have been wasted.

The result is of much more importance to Luton than can be measured by the two points gained. The good start will be a great encouragement to the team, but at the same time the sturdy opposition of Mardy will prevent the men becoming over-confident. If Luton can repeat this performance on Saturday when the return match is played at Luton, a more optimistic tone will prevail amongst the supporters than that which was noticed after the debacle at Southend. Luton's "star" player on Saturday was Bob Hawkes, who played a splendid game, in addition to scoring two goals. The other half-backs were also prominent, but the forwards were too cramped for space on the peculiar ground to be at their best, although the wingers, Stephenson and Worth, showed up well at times. Luton's defence played soundly all through, and it was only when facing a veritable hurricane in the second half that the goal was pierced. Mardy showed more dash than brilliance, and the members of the team will have to combine a little better if they are to do well this season.

There was a fairly strong breeze in the first half, and, with this in their favour, Luton had most of the game. It took them a few minutes to settle down, but once they did so, they commenced to make things hum. Bob started the fun with one of those shots that he so often served up in his younger days, and the ball went with terrific force into the net. Mardy made some dangerous raids at times, but after half an hour's play, Luton were two up, Bob Hawkes smashing the ball into the net from Stephenson's centre. Stephenson was also prominently concerned in the third goal, which came immediately afterwards. Taking the ball down the wing, he put in a beautiful centre and enabled Murphy to score with a fine shot. None of the goals, it will be seen, were soft ones, and this fine shooting is certainly encouraging. A remarkable save by Day, after the opposing centre had the goal at his mercy, and a close attempt by Worth, were the only other outstanding incidents before the interval.

It was typical of the Welsh climate for the wind to increase later in the game, and the Mardy players obviously meant to take full advantage of the altered conditions. They soon reduced the score against them, for the outside left, securing the ball just as it was about to pass over the goal line, centred into the goal mouth. Day punched away, and Hopwood, dashing up, sent the ball past the goalkeeper. A promising attempt by Worth was negatived by wild shooting, and then Hopwood sprung a surprise by sending the ball at terrific pace through a crowd of players, past the unsighted Day. It was a beautiful goal, if somewhat lucky. It now became a dour struggle between the Luton defence and the Mardy forwards, but the visitors kept the flag flying, so that when time was called, the score stood:—

LUTON 3, MARDY 2.