

ABERDARE v. LUTON.

Played at Aberdare on Saturday. Result :—

Aberdare	3 goals.
Luton	nil.

The teams were as follow :—

Luton--R. H. Abbott; Henderson and Potts; F. Hawkes, Wilson, and R. Hawkes; Stephenson, Wileman, Smith, Murphy, and Worth.

Aberdare--Roderick; Goodwin and Bilson; Rose, Parkes, and H. Williams; Bennett, Nash, Phillips, Griffiths, and Thornton.

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

Probably it has been forgotten by the majority of Lutonians, but Saturday was not the first occasion that Luton have visited Aberdare, for in Season 1902-3 a friendly was played on the same ground. The only player, however, who took part in both matches was Fred Hawkes. Aberdare, being one of the oldest Soccer teams in South Wales, have quite a decent pitch. Although you get a view of the Welsh mountains, as at Mardy and Tonypandy, it is not so depressing, for at Aberdare the mountain sides are covered with grass and studded with trees. The district itself is more of a town character than the two mentioned above, and altogether the conditions are of a normal nature.

As was generally expected after his trial run against Brentford, R. H. Abbott was included in the team. As a matter of fact, the only change from Wednesday's side was that Smith took his usual position at centre-forward. Aberdare are trying to strengthen their team, and on Saturday expected to introduce three new players, but the transfer of Ryals (late Brentford) not being completed, he was left out. The two new "Darians" were Bennett, an old club-mate of Wilson, having been with the Hearts of Midlothian last season, and H. Williams, an amateur from Treharris.

The match had been set aside as a benefit to Goodwin, the local captain, and therefore the attendance was above the average, there being at least 3,000 spectators on the ground. The conditions promised a good game, for there was little wind and the pitch appeared to be all that could be desired from a player's point of view, being firm but not too hard.

Luton started as if they intended to make sure of the result straight away, and for a time were all over their opponents. But although they tricked the halves easily enough, when they came to close quarters the finish was lacking; either the final attempt was a wild one or they ran themselves into a tangle for the home back to clear the danger. Still, at this stage it appeared simply a question of how long the home defenders would be able to hold out.

Stephenson was the first Lutonian to get away, and he finished up with a high centre, which dropped a yard too short, passing over the line for a goal kick. This was followed by a corner forced by some dashing play on the part of the Luton outside right. The corner kick was dropped a trifle too far out, but Wilson secured the ball and sent in a shot which Roderick easily disposed of. Just afterwards Wilson again attempted to open the scoring, but his shot was too high, and passed well over the bar. A most promising bit of mid-field work was nullified by Worth being given offside—a rather doubtful decision, by the way.

The next time Worth secured the ball he was allowed to go on, and he tried to scrow the ball

into goal, but, unfortunately, it only struck the outside of the net. All the play was in the home quarters, and when Smith gave the ball to Bob Hawkes, the Luton captain had the evident intention of trying to set his forwards an example as to how goals should be scored, for he dashed clean by the backs but, unfortunately, stumbled, and, not knowing how near his opponents were, took hurried aim, with the result that the ball flew several yards over the bar.

Similar incidents became far too frequent, and for all the pressure Roderick had a comparatively easy time. For instance, a centre from Stephenson appeared to present a good opening, but Smith handled close in, and danger was averted. Abbott was not tested during the opening twenty minutes, but a break-away gave Thornton his first chance, only to find the home winger as far off the target as the Luton forwards had been previously. But when he got another opportunity he did better, and Abbott was called upon to punch his shot clear.

The game became more even in character, and half an hour from the start Thornton once more got clear. Although it seemed that he was offside when the ball came to him, the referee would not heed the Lutonians' appeal, and he sent it well over to Nash on the opposite wing, who was quite unmarked, and with a rising shot Abbott was beaten. A strong protest was made against this goal standing, but Mr. Russell would not alter his decision. No doubt this ruling upset the Luton players, for they never again played with the same confidence, and the home side were top dog up to the interval. Indeed, but for a long shot from Murphy, and one decent attempt by Worth, which landed the ball on the top of the net, the Luton attack was a mere fizzle.

For a few minutes after the re-start, Luton promised to bring about an alteration, and Roderick was twice called upon, once when Eilson miskicked a few yards out, but the home goal-keeper caught the shot and threw away before the advantage was pressed home. Abbott, at the opposite goal, was being tested more severely when the home forwards attacked in force, and he saved brilliantly a hot drive from Griffiths, although falling full length to get the ball. Within two or three minutes Abbott brought off good saves from shots by Thornton and Phillips respectively. A bit later he threw himself full length and conceded a corner kick when it appeared odds on a goal.

It was all Aberdare now, and to make matters worse Stephenson was badly kicked on the ankle, and although he did not leave the field at first he was quite useless, and Lawson called him to the touch line for treatment. For a few minutes Potts was playing on his own at full back, Henderson and Fred Hawkes respectively advancing a stage forward. But when Stephenson returned the players mentioned resumed their former positions. Still, all the sting seemed to have departed from the Luton attack, which was easily overpowered whenever the ball was secured momentarily. It is true two corners were forced, but nothing came of them.

About a quarter of an hour from the finish, a dash right through on the part of Nash brought along a second goal to Aberdare, and any hope Luton had of saving the game was quite spoilt. Still, it should be mentioned that more energy was put into the Luton efforts, and for a time they really seemed likely to score, but the home players, seeing victory ahead, concentrated upon defending their position, and were successful in keeping their opponents at bay. Just on time Luton received a further shock, for a sudden breakaway found their defence unprepared, and Potts slipping down, presented Nash with a clear run into goal, and, to the delight of the spectators, he netted for the third time during the match.

Aberdare fully deserved to win, for they put more energy into their attack. Still, the margin flattered them, and the third goal coming right on time, makes the defeat appear more pronounced than the actual play warranted. Parkes, who took the place of Hamilton, recently transferred to Portsmouth, had quite an easy task to hold Smith, while Goodwin and Bilson defended so well that Roderick was not given much to do. Among the forwards, Nash stood out by his dash in front of goal, but the line as a whole played sound football without any pretensions to brilliance.

Luton were best served by Abbott and a good half-back line; otherwise they played below form, with the exception of Henderson, who was safe at back as a rule. Indeed, the summing-up of the local critic was that "Abbott kept a good goal, but the Luton forwards were poor, and failed to make use of the opportunities given them by a very good half-back line"; and this is a fair statement of the facts. Abbott had not the slightest chance with either goal, and little that is good can be said of the forwards, the three inside men in particular giving a poor show. Although undoubtedly the award of the first goal rankled in the minds of the Luton players, it is really no excuse for such a feeble exhibition.