

FIRST DEFEAT IN SECOND DIVISION.

Luton go down badly at Aberdare

POOR FORWARD WORK.

The third visit to South Wales brought disaster to Luton in the most overwhelming manner. It was known that Aberdare were a better class club than either of the teams Luton had met so far, but this was considered rather an advantage than otherwise, and hopes were high that football of something like First Division calibre would materialise. The pitch also was not thought likely to handicap the players in the same way as at certain Welsh grounds. Therefore, the heavy defeat came as a great surprise.

Aberdare is one of the oldest "Soccer" centres in South Wales, and it will be remembered by Lutonians that nine years ago Luton played a friendly on the same ground. Even then the Club was professional, and were hard to beat at home. On Saturday the match was for the benefit of Goodwin, the captain and right back who is now playing his sixth season at Aberdare. He went to them from Burton United. Many players who have played for Aberdare have joined League clubs, and only last week Hamilton was transferred to Portsmouth at a record fee for South Wales, the amount being reported to be £450 and a match at Aberdare. Only the week previous Oldham Athletic were playing at Aberdare in connection with a transfer arrangement for Bradbury, and it is interesting to note that Lashbrooke was playing at left half in the visiting side. Of course, the most famous "Darian," to quote the name by which the Aberdare players are known, was Wedlock, but in his case no fee was reaped by the club, as Bristol City signed him during the close season, and it was not the custom at that time for Aberdare to engage their players so early. Wedlock does not, however, belong to Aberdare. It is said he lived at Bristol all the time he played for the Welsh club.

When Luton visited Aberdare before, there was no dressing accommodation on the ground, but this is now being remedied, and although not quite finished the dressing-rooms promise to be an up-to-date affair. On Saturday no complaint could be made under that head. Aberdare have the reputation of rising to an occasion, and the writer was informed by the pioneer of "Soccer" in South Wales, so far as the present boom is concerned, that in his opinion Aberdare would make the Luton match one of their big performances. Last season Portsmouth went down heavily at Aberdare, and somehow or other Luton was considered to be a parallel case, and were to be subdued at any cost. It being the first benefit given by the club to a player, the occasion was felt to merit some such result.

The players turned out as under:—

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.

The opening play gave no indication of the final result. Luton were easily the better side at the start, and the players were apparently lulled into a false sense of security by the comparatively tame exhibition of the locals. Although, however, individually Luton were clever in mid-field, they failed to press this home, and no goals came. Indeed, Roderick was not given anything really difficult to deal with. Many promising attacks were nullified by one or another of the Lutonians getting offside, Worth in particular being pulled up time after time. Once or twice there was a doubt about the correctness of the decision, but on the whole the referee was quite right. Quite early on, however, Worth managed to get the ball across, and Bob Hawkes, dashing in, appeared likely to add to his stock of goals in South Wales, and for the third time open Luton's scoring account. He got the ball under his control all right, and went clean through

before taking aim, and it was rather a surprise to find the ball sailing yards over the bar.

Time after time Luton brought the ball through, and it seemed only a question of how long it would be before they actually scored. But it all ended in a goal kick or offside against someone. It was a most tantalising exhibition for a Lutonian to watch, and the players should have been warned by an incident some quarter of an hour from the start. A sudden breakaway by Aberdare found the Luton defence quite unprepared, and Henderson was called almost on to the opposing right wing to prevent them getting a shot at Abbott. If the inside right had been a moment sooner in getting his kick in, it appeared he must have netted.

After this let off, the game went on for a time in the old way. Luton were allowed to play in mid-field, but were pulled up short near goal, or, what was more often the case, ran themselves into a bunch of defenders. Then, half-an-hour from the start, Nash, getting the ball from Thornton, with only Abbott to beat, scored with a rising shot, which hit the top of the net. Both the Aberdare players were suspiciously offside, and Luton made an ineffectual protest, the referee being very firm. This put more life into the home players, and they really never looked back. Abbott had several shots to stop before the interval, but nothing came of them, and the score at that stage read: Aberdare 1, Luton 0.

The second half opened with Aberdare pressing, and Abbott was called upon to save three or four really good attempts. One save, at the expense of a corner, was very fine, and earned him the applause of the spectators. To make matters worse Stephenson was practically useless, as a result of a kick on the ankle. For some time he was off the field, and even when he returned he could not get the ball if it meant a run to reach it. Although Luton were then playing ten men, and for a time played the one back game, they managed to keep these strong attacks out, but with Stephenson limping back to the field, the disposition of the players resumed to normal, and almost immediately Nash ran clean through and netted his second goal.

This had the result that Luton now realised it was up against them to alter this somewhat unexpected state of affairs. During the final quarter of an hour they put greater energy into their work, and pressed hotly, but could not find the target. Still, this was about the only period when they really looked like scoring, for in the opening twenty minutes, although they practically monopolised the play, they finished tamely. If this pressure had brought a goal, and the final result had been 2-1 in favour of Aberdare, it would have represented the game fairly well, but just on time Nash managed to get through again, and thus perform the hat trick. It was a very lucky point, for Potts slipped clean up, and was on the ground when the Aberdare player came through with the ball, and, giving Abbott no chance whatever, Nash drove it into the net. Result:—Aberdare 3, Luton 0.

COMMENT ON THE PLAY AND PLAYERS.

It looks very poor to lose by such a large margin as three goals, but at no time during the game could it be said that such a result was likely. The third goal, coming after quite a long spell of Luton pressure, gives altogether a wrong idea of the game. Still, Luton were at fault for not pushing home their efforts in the opening twenty minutes, and for this the forwards must bear the blame. Abbott came out of his first big match in fine style, and everything he had to do was done well. No blame whatever attaches to him for the three goals, for he had no chance with them. Henderson was the better of the two backs, Potts, particularly in the second half, making several slips. Half-back was Luton's strongest line, with Bob Hawkes the most noticeable, although Wilson played a hard-working game, while Fred got through a lot of work in his usual quiet style.

The front rank were disappointing in the extreme, for after promising to do things they frittered away their chances in the most tantalising manner. Worth did not get enough to do, while Stephenson, even before his injury, did not get off so promptly as usual. Wileman was probably the cleverest mid-field player, but he finished poorly. Smith was too slow, and did not get a proper grip of the game at all.

Aberdare play the regulation game much better than either Mardy or Mid Rhondda. No player was particularly brilliant, unless Nash's dash can be classed as such. But where the whole team stood out was the enthusiasm they put into their efforts after the first goal came along. Probably Luton could have kept the margin down if they had played a defensive game in the second half, but with promotion the object goals were needed, and an open game was adopted deliberately by the Luton captain. This was undoubtedly the proper course, although the desired result was not attained. Bennett, at outside right, was a new player, and he quite pleased the spectators with many dangerous centres. Although he does not get away so quickly as one would like, he finished better than the Luton wingers. On the whole, Aberdare must be put down as a level lot on Saturday's form, but it is understood they have a nasty habit of falling away when meeting average opponents, and lay themselves out for what one looked upon as the better clubs. By the way, they were voted very unlucky in losing to South end by quite independent judges it being claimed they were the smarter team on that day.