

NEWPORT v. LUTON.

Played at Somerton Park, Newport, on Saturday. Result:—

Newport	5 goals.
Luton	1 goal.

The teams were as follow:—

Luton — Abbott; Henderson and Potts; F. Hawkes, Thompson, and Wilson; Wileman, Murphy, Stephenson, R. M. Hawkes, and Worth.

Newport—Husbands; Perry and Taylor; Thornton, Lean, and MacDougall; Holt, Hall, W. Fyfe, G. Fyfe, and Bowdler.

Referee, Mr. F. Curtis (Bristol).

The visit of Luton had been looked forward to as one of the tit-bits of the season, but the Usksiders' most enthusiastic upporter never dreamed in his most optimistic vision of the game of the actual result. As a matter of fact, when Luton arrived on the scene of action, the general opinion was that the locals were in for a licking, particularly as on the previous Thursday they had given such a sorry show against Mardy. Possibly this very fact made the Newport players desperate, and in some measure explains the mystery. For it must be conceded at the outset that the home players gave a most remarkable display on the truly awful pitch at Somerton Park—to give the Newport ground its local title, although anything less like a park it is impossible to conceive.

Among the Newport players were two who are well known in Luton, the inside-right being Proctor Hall, who five seasons ago played for Luton, while G. Fyfe, the inside-left, was the old Watford player, although he usually figured at half-back when visiting Luton for our neighbours. The remainder of the side would not be so well known in this part of the world, but Thornton, the right-half, has been with the Villa and Stoke, and Husbands and MacDougall have played in former seasons for Cardiff City. At the commencement of the season Newport made very little stir, but recently they secured W. Fyfe from a local side called Risca, and he has apparently livened up the attack and has been a pretty frequent scorer himself.

Newport is the nearest Welsh (?) club in the competition, and the journey down was easily accomplished on Saturday morning; indeed, it is more get-at-able than several of the old First Division grounds, the run from Paddington only taking two hours and a half. As a matter of fact, Newport is in England, but for football purposes is generally assumed to be a Welsh centre, and for Rugby at least gives an International qualification for Wales. Newport is a town almost double the size of Luton, but Soccer is yet in its infancy, and it has not caught on in the same way as in certain other districts.

Although the Rugby Club had no match on Saturday, the crowd was very little over 2,000, and the estimates given in the Press were very wide of the mark. Among the number were the whole of the Cardiff City players, who have to visit the ground in a fortnight's time, and they are not looking forward to the visit with any great pleasure, for the pitch is absolutely the worst on which I have seen a serious game played, and even if the weather improves in the meantime, it will be far from ideal this season. It was given out that the local officials had been hard at work for the past fortnight endeavouring to get the playing area into decent condition, but while there was plenty of evidence of their hard work, the result was far from satisfactory. The mud had been scraped off from about half the pitch, and in its place rough ashes had been substituted, but the continuous rain nullified the effect and the surface presented a curious appearance. With the exception of the extreme corners, there was no grass to be seen at all, the remainder of the pitch being divided between patches of slimy mud, over ankle deep, or a wonderful black mixture of ashes

and water. As a consequence, the ball invariably stopped dead every time it touched the ground, and it took the visiting players right off their game and they never got over the handicap; hence the big turn-up, for it was a surprise even to the locals, and was advertised by the Newport Press as a "Great Surprise" on the contents bills.

The start was disastrous from a Luton point of view, for after a temporary visit to the home quarters, MacDougall intercepted, and ploughing through the mire, outpaced F. Hawkes and Henderson, and, lifting the ball well into the goal-mouth, brought about an opening goal inside two minutes. The attempt to score was made by Geo. Fyfe, but his aim was faulty, and it appeared all danger was past when the ball travelled wide of the uprights, but contact with the ground about a yard inside the playing area brought it to a dead stop, and before the Luton defence realised the danger, W. Fyfe had dashed up, and bringing the leather back a yard or two, promptly drove it through.

This early success undoubtedly had a great influence on the game, and the locals put in any amount of energy, to the discomfiture of the Lutonians, who could not adapt themselves to the awful conditions. But it was midway through the first half before any addition was made to the score, and then two goals came in quick succession. A run through on the part of Bowdler led up to the first of these. Although Abbott got the ball away from the initial attack, the ball was returned by Holt, who sent in a fine cross drive from the wing, which found the net. From the kick off Worth forced a corner, which Taylor cleared, and, ploughing through the mud, Lean passed the ball to MacDougall, who, in a similar style to when the opening goal was scored, transferred to Geo. Fyfe, and the latter losing no time, sent it on for W. Fyfe to dash up and head into the net, giving Abbott no chance whatever.

Crossing over with a three-goal lead, Newport were content for a time to rest on their laurels, and Luton made their most determined effort of the match to bring about an alteration, Bob Hawkes in particular working his hardest to put a better complexion on the game. Two or three times he attempted to get through, and after Perry had twice prevented his getting in a shot, he succeeded in bringing his Welsh bag of goals to five by netting from ten yards' range before Husbands could get to the ball, although he left his goal in an endeavour to reach it before Bob could take his shot.

Encouraged by this, Luton kept up the pressure, without, however, getting in many actual shots. But all hope of drawing, much less winning, fled when a lucky fourth goal came about from a curling shot evidently intended for a centre by Holt, but which found its way just inside the angle of the bar and upright in the far corner of the net. Just on time Luton made a rush for the Newport goal and forced a corner, but this being cleared, the ball was promptly at the opposite end of the field, and Geo. Fyfe getting a pass from the right wing, put on a fifth goal from close range.

The local comment after the game was that it was the keenest, cleanest, and "muddiest" game seen on the ground. But it must be confessed the keenness was mostly on one side—and that not Luton. Certainly Newport were full value for a win, and the only excuse that can be urged on behalf of Luton was the terrible state of the pitch, and the fact that the home side were more used to such conditions. Abbott was not to blame for the heavy defeat, but otherwise the Luton players came out second best in every department. On Saturday's form, Newport possess a couple of fine wingers, and W. Fyfe, popularly dubbed "Ike," is quite a capable centre. The defence do not stand on ceremony, and were quite content to get a kick at the ball without waiting for it to bounce, and this game paid under the circumstances.