

LUTON LOSE THEIR CHANCE OF PROMOTION AT SWANSEA.

Swans first club to take four points.

Everyone recognised that the match at Swansea on Saturday would have an important bearing on the promotion question, and the home officials anticipated a record gate. From this point of view, therefore, the rain which commenced with a steady downpour about an hour before the kick off was a calamity. With the Rugby team away they had Swansea to themselves, and it was estimated by the Swansea officials that at least £100 would represent the actual loss consequent upon the wretched weather conditions. The ground does not possess any covered accommodation whatever, and this has proved a big loss to the club this season, and Saturday most of all. The Vetch Field, as the enclosure is called, presents a remarkable appearance on first sight, for the playing area and the banks surrounding are composed of nothing but black ashes. No attempt has been made to turf the pitch, but Bob Hawkes did discover a few blades of grass in one corner which had forced their way through the otherwise black top surface. Fortunately the playing pitch is comparatively level, but here and there the wear and tear of the season has caused some holes to develop, and the rain on Saturday filled these with water and made the conditions a trifle unpleasant to the players in the vicinity when the ball landed in one of these miniature lakes. But for the fact that a fall on the hard surface might entail a nasty cut, the playing pitch presents little handicap, and is far in advance of the average grounds in South Wales. Naturally the ball comes up rather quickly, and this means the game is rather faster than usual in consequence.

Luton relied upon the team which drew at South-end and Llanelly, and all the players fully realised they were set no ordinary task if promotion was to be obtained. The home club introduced two of their recent captures in Fyfe, of Newport County, who figured against Luton on the mud and ash heap when Newport was visited with such disastrous results. The other new player who, by the way, was making his first appearance at home, was Anderson, late of Queens Park Rangers. There was quite a strong breeze blowing, and when Bob Hawkes lost the toss it appeared rather a bad look-out for Luton, but as will be noted a clean sheet was kept up to the interval, and hopes at half-time were pretty confident among the Luton players of bringing off the first home defeat of the Swans.

The teams turned out as under:—

Luton:—H. Bateman; Jarvie and Potts; Fred Hawkes, Wilson and R. Hawkes; Stephenson, Wileman, Smith, Holland, and Worth.

Swansea:—Fisher; Nicholas and Cleverley; Duffy, Hamilton and Jepp; Messer, Anderson, Ball, Fyfe, and Swarbrick.

Referee, Mr. F. Curtis, Bristol.

The Swans were early in evidence, Bull sending his left wing off. Swarbrick forced a corner, but Jarvie cleared the flag kick in good style. But the attack could not be beaten off, and the home players were very aggressive for some time. Several times affside against one or other of the Swansea forwards relieved the pressure, but the relief was only temporary, and Luton did not set up any danger for several minutes. Eventually Luton got away on the left, but Worth ran a bit

in front of his partner, and offside spoilt the movement. A few minutes later Holland and Worth brought the ball down the field, but Cleverley stopped the rush, and play once more was at the opposite end of the field. Ball tried a high curling shot, which Bateman got to in fine style, but on the whole the Luton goalkeeper was not overworked considering the strong wind which helped the home attack to keep the ball in the Luton half for quite a long period.

Bob Hawkes started an attack on the home goal by a clever pass out to Worth, who slipped by Cleverley, but his shot went behind. If it had been more accurately directed it might have proved the turning point, for there was plenty of force behind the ball, and Fisher was a bit taken by surprise. A silly foul by Smith just outside the penalty area almost led up to a goal, but Bateman caught the drive in grand style, and thus saved an ugly situation. Luton's first real chance came to Stephenson, but he could not get proper control of the ball, and Nicholas came to the rescue and punted the ball up the field. The referee allowed Worth to go on when he was certainly offside, and at one time it seemed likely this would cost the Swans a goal, for the Luton winger was clean through, although well out on the touch line. Instead, however, of working into goal he tried a long shot, which struck the side net on the outside.

By this time Luton were having a bigger share of the exchanges, and once or twice gave the home defenders not a little anxiety. Twice, indeed, a goal should certainly have been scored when the home defence was in a regular tangle against a hot attack on the Swans' goal. Wileman had worked over to the left when he took a shot at goal from close range and had the misfortune to see the ball hit the bottom of the upright with considerable force. Fisher was out of goal at the moment, and it appeared any odds on a goal. Smith, however, dallied with the chance, and eventually Cleverley got it away. On the second occasion Fisher fell over just out of goal, and the least touch must have brought about a goal, but somehow the home backs managed to clear amid cheers from the spectators, who were quite prepared for a goal against their side. At the opposite end Ball missed when well placed by sending the ball wide. Without doubt the two chances mentioned above should have resulted in Luton being a couple of goals up at the interval, but the actual score at this stage stood—

Luton 0, Swansea 0.

Luton were expected to put on more pressure with the wind in their favour, but it did not exactly pan out in this way, and the home forwards kept the ball well out of the home half of the field for some long time without, however, getting any real shot at Bateman. A slip by Potts caused the first real danger. Bateman was injured in saving a shot near the upright, but he managed to get the ball over the line while on the ground for a corner, which was cleared. But a few minutes later another corner led up to the opening goal, although Bateman strongly protested against this point being allowed. He had good grounds for his complaint, as he was charged into by Ball before he could get to the ball, which actually struck him on the face and glanced into the net. No one in the crowd could say who scored and in the local evening press no fewer than three players had the credit of scoring the point, so mixed up were the players of both teams. The fact remains that Ball was the player who forced the ball through by his charge into the Luton goal.

Luton played their hardest after this reverse, and for a time were right on top of their opponents. Wileman and Smith both tried shots, which Fisher saved, and, aided by the wind, strong pressure was put upon the home backs. Hamilton brought Bob Hawkes down when he was going through nicely, and the resulting free kick only missed the net by inches. It was anybody's game, and Luton at least deserved to equalise, but they could not force a goal.

Then, a quarter of an hour before the finish Anderson was badly let in, and he took the ball almost up to Bateman before he made his shot. Thus he was able to place it clean into the net, and amid thunders of applause placed the issue beyond doubt.

In the closing stages Luton tried desperately hard to reduce the lead, and Bob Hawkes made two or three attempts to break through on his own, but luck was dead against him. He could not manage to increase his bag of goals in South Wales, and so Luton's chances of promotion were reduced practically to zero by the final score reading—Swansea 2, Luton 0.

COMMENT ON THE PLAY AND PLAYERS.

The actual result does not convey a fair representation of the game, as it was a most exciting and desperately fought encounter between two teams who both recognised the importance of the issue. It was a struggle for promotion, and by winning Swansea have now the best chance of securing the second place and thereby figuring as a First Division Club next season. It was a much more interesting game than the first meeting at Luton—Lutonians will remember the poor show

at Luton, when the Swans surprised themselves and the football world generally by defeating the locals by four clear goals—and although Luton failed to obtain revenge they certainly tried their hardest.

On Saturday at Swansea the teams were very evenly matched, in defence, both at full back and goal, while the half-backs on both sides can look back upon their work with pleasure and take credit for doing their utmost for their club. As a matter of fact it was only in attack that Swansea could claim any superiority, and this won them the match undoubtedly. Messer is a really brilliant winger, and Anderson made quite a favourable first appearance at home. Ball, as at Luton, rather spoilt his display by his tendency to get offside, and this despite the referee's decisions, but he kept his wings well at work, and is a dangerous man if given the least bit of rope. The left wing pair did not fit quite as well together as the opposite pair, and Fyfe has got to justify his inclusion at the expense of Grierson, who formerly figured at inside left.

The best shots on the Luton side came from Bob and Fred Hawkes, and his Luton admirers would have been rather surprised at two attempts Fred made all along the ground, which with the least shade of luck would have resulted in goals. Jarvie was the better back of the two, but Potts played a very decent game. Unfortunately he went lame towards the close, but the result was pretty safe by that time, and it did not affect the result. Bateman could not be blamed for either goal, and did everything possible to save his side.