

TOWN'S LAST HOME GAME.

Cardiff's second visit to Luton.

There was a very pronounced end-of-the-season touch about Luton Town's last home match on Saturday, when Cardiff City came to play off the first of their Southern Alliance fixtures with the rival Blues of a lighter shade. The City have troubled so little about winning form in the Alliance that they hold just the reverse position in this competition to that which they enjoy in the Southern League Second Division, and even though Luton are in the running for runners-up medals, there was nevertheless an air of leisurely indifference and inactivity amongst the players that less than two thousand spectators found the game a trifle boring, and at times even pantomimic. The result was exactly the same as the Second Division match on Boxing Day, a win for Luton by two goals to nil, but that was the only respect in which the two games bore the slightest resemblance. Heavy storm showers in the morning threatened to render the playing conditions as appalling as those under which Cardiff had to battle on the occasion of their previous visit to Luton, but a brilliant clearance, accompanied by a particularly loisterous breeze altered all this. Except for a few puddles in the centre and round the goals, the pitch afforded very favourable going, and, in fact, the only thing which barred the playing conditions from being described as ideal was the strength and gusty character of the wind.

* * *

Both sides differed in several respects from those which previously met at Luton. Cardiff were short of four of the first team players they have retained for their first season in the premier division of the Southern League, Geo. Burton, the inside right; Cassidy, centre-half; Leah, at back; and Knaeshaw, the goalkeeper; but, on the other hand, they had their crack centre Devlin, and Clark, the forward they paid Bradford City £300

for, while George Latham, the trainer, who has played once for Ireland this season, turned out at centre-half. Luton have, of course, materially altered their team since Boxing Day, and with Potts reappearing in place of Henderson, they were practically at full strength. Appended is the full list of players:—

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

Cardiff:—Lewis; Doncaster and Croft; Harvey, Latham and Hardy; Tracey, Clark, Devlin, J. Burton, and Evans.

Referee, Mr. F. W. Barton, Ealing.

* * *

The homesters opened in really exhilarating style against wind and sun, for, going straight for goal, Stephenson gave Wileman a nice opening, the inside right tried a shot which was caught up in the wind and sent astray, and Holland ran between the backs, got to the ball, and shot hard. The goalkeeper was in the way quite by accident, and though he stopped the shot Holland followed up and easily scored. The point was, however, not allowed, though for what reason was not at all clear. If the referee's reason was offside it was a palpable error. For quite ten minutes Luton kept up the pressure, though it was not easy work to get the ball along in the teeth of the wind. Bob Hawkes was in irresistible vein and excelled with his artistry, and Worth gave glimpses of that early season brilliance which has so sadly deteriorated since Christmas. Twice he had beauties cleverly cleared by Hardy, and then, following a corner, he got across another fine centre, from which Holland struck the cross bar, and Croft, in trying to clear, was within an ace of beating his own goalkeeper. A goal was, however, only nine minutes coming, and Worth was the agency, though not the scorer. Running close in he, with a hot shot, compelled Lewis to concede a corner, and from this he again tested the custodian. The return came his way, and he nicely placed it into the centre for Wileman to score one of his sparkling goals.

* * *

This early promise did not materialise. Cardiff improved appreciably, and for some minutes had all the better of the exchanges, but they rarely got to close quarters. For the most part the attack relied on the individual dash of Devlin and Evans, the Welsh international being the only one who really went near scoring. From a swinging pass out to the wing he beat Jarvie and drew Bateman out, and with the goal empty he flashed the ball across, missing the post by inches. After this Luton were nearly always the aggressors, but the exchanges were mostly of the midfield order, and though there was plenty of smart footwork in which Bob Hawkes was always to the fore, there was almost an entire absence of life. Smith seemed more bent than usual on amusing himself and the crowd, and generally the forwards lacked thrustfulness near goal. Lewis shaped none too well at what little he had to do, but there was no more scoring before the interval. Luton once set up a confident appeal for a penalty when a likely header from Wileman was stopped in a way that excited suspicion, but the linesman who was consulted was not prepared to advise the referee to allow it, and just before the change of ends Stephenson and Smith both missed the easiest of opportunities by muddling when the goalkeeper had been drawn out of his charge.

* * *

The second half was even more leisurely and tame than the first, incidents being quite at a discount. The homesters were generally attacking without showing much result for their work, and practically the only times a goal looked likely were when first Burton and then Devlin were sailing through on their own, to be brought down from behind. From one of the free kicks Bateman fisted away finely from Evans, but he did not deal so convincingly with a long shot from Devlin, only clearing at the second attempt. There had been nearly half an hour of frightfully uninteresting tactics, relieved by one or two brilliant long pots by Bob Hawkes and Worth, when the spectators were almost startled by another goal. Smith got going and sent across the goal mouth, and dashing in Stephenson registered a beauty. The last minutes or so were quite farcical. Wileman was badly fouled by the Cardiff trainer, but the referee did not seem to think so, and it was only when he consulted Mr. Foster, the Secretary of the Alliance, who was on the line, that he was persuaded Luton's claim for a penalty was warranted. The Cardiff players were very wrath with the decision, and started kicking the ball over the stand, and it was not until two or three of them had had a talking to that the game proceeded. Wileman took the penalty kick and failed, shooting straight at the goalkeeper. But the visitors continued to nurse their dissatisfaction. Instead of attempting to play serious football they were content to allow Luton to do all the pressing, and seize upon every opportunity that presented itself to lift the ball clean out of the ground. It can therefore be understood what a genuine relief it was when time was sounded with the score—

Luton 2, Cardiff 0.