

FOOTBALL.

TREHARRIS V. LUTON.

Played at Treharris, on Saturday. Result:—

Luton 2 goals.

Treharris 1 goal.

The teams were as follow:—

Luton: Mitchell; Elvey and Jarvie; F. Hawkes, Frith, and R. M. Hawkes; Stevens, Wileman, Simms, Rollinson, and Wilkie.

Treharris: Demmery; Timmins and G. Williams; Downes, Owen, and Pike; Tippet, Morgan, Willis, H. Williams, and Witcombe.

Referee: Lieut. W. C. Clover (Leicester).

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Except that Donaghy was unable to turn out on account of an injury sustained at Ilford, the team which left Luton on Friday evening was the same as in the previous Southern League games, Stevens being the substitute at outside-right. Cardiff was made the headquarters as usual on Friday evening, but it was intended to return on Saturday, and arrangements for the cabs to bring the party across Cardiff were made, but the Senghenydd disaster quite disorganised the traffic on the Railway. Although Treharris was left punctually on time, it was a terribly slow journey from Caerphilly to Cardiff, and the team arrived at Cardiff a quarter of an hour after the Fishguard express had left the Great Western Station.

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Although the Luton party did not actually pass the ill-fated colliery, they saw plenty to remind them of what an awful affair it was, for the station was crowded with relatives and friends in deep mourning, going or returning from the funerals, which took place all round the district. At Treharris the only evidence of the disaster, however, was the small gate which assembled, as hundreds had gone over the mountain to Senghenydd, it was stated. But in any case, the Treharris officials were not expecting a large attendance, for the gates were not opened until a few minutes before the advertised time of kick-off. This, by the way, was 3.45, which, of course, would have been too late at Luton, but the light lasts much longer in the South Wales area, and, as a matter of fact, it was fully 3.50 before the game was started. Even then Treharris only mustered ten players, but H. Williams made up the side ten minutes later.

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The surroundings are depressing, for everything appears to be going to ruin, and it is evident little attention is given to the ground. The goal nets would certainly not pass muster in England, but what is a poor referee to do?

He knows if he raises any objection it is impossible to provide better, while, of course, the visiting officials are not at all anxious to have the match postponed. As described last season, the pitch is far from full-size, and this means the ball is continually out of play. Only two balls were available on Saturday, and both of these appeared to have been left over from last season. One, at least, was considerably the worse for wear, but handicaps of this nature are all part of the game in South Wales and little notice is taken.

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What is far worse is the awful state of the pitch itself. Right down the middle it is almost bare of grass, but in the corners the grass is tufty and long, and it is quite impossible to pass the ball along the ground. Apparently it has been left to grow all the summer. Such a thing as a roller is out of the question, as it could not be brought on the ground, which is best pictured as a ledge between two streets, one of which must be at least seventy feet below the other. As a matter of fact, the pitch is about twenty feet below the cellars of the houses on the top side, and level with the chimneys of the houses on the bottom.

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Luton lost the toss, but as both ends were equally bad, this mattered nothing. As was expected, the visitors kept the ball well in the home half, without, however, testing Demmery for the first few minutes. Wilkie was the first player to get clear, but taking the ball into the jungle area near the corner flag he failed to lift it properly and it was a poor pass which Rollinson got, and rather unexpectedly, for Wilkie shaped more for a centre. However, Rollinson made an attempt to open the score, but he placed the ball yards over the top of the net. Wileman made a much better attempt a few minutes later, when the ball just passed on the wrong side of the far post, Demmery standing helpless.

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Twelve minutes after the start, Stevens got the better of the back and going right through worked towards the goal with the ball. Demmery might have prevented a goal if he had come out, but he remained at his post, and Stevens never loosed the ball until well in the goal area, and then he gave the ex-Bristol player no chance whatever with his final shot, which opened the score. Luton appeared likely to increase their lead when Wileman got in a shot from Stevens' pass, but Demmery, with a clever back-handed save, sent the ball clear for a corner, which was badly placed by Wilkie, the ball going behind.

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One of the home players made a deliberate foul on Frith, which the referee did not notice, and this spoilt the centre-half for the remainder of the game, for he went in for getting his own back and was continually pulled up for silly fouls.

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Wilkie, who was wearing a new pair of boots for the first time in a match, left the field at this stage to change one of them, but nothing of moment happened during his absence. Bob Hawkes tried one of his pile-drivers, but the direction was at fault and Demmery was not called upon to pick the ball out of the net.

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The only time Treharris were really dangerous in the first half was about five minutes before the change over, when Witcombe got away and dropped in an awkward shot, and as at least three of the home forwards were well up it took all Mitchell's ability to get the ball clear. The Luton goalkeeper came out of the incident with credit, for he cleverly took the ball, which

seemed to be making for the corner of the net, and sent it well down the field.

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The players did not leave the field at half-time, but for the first quarter of an hour there was little of interest, except for a rather dangerous attempt to kick the ball out of Demmery's hands on the part of Wilkie. The crowd were inclined to resent Wilkie's action, and the referee gave a free kick.

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On the whole, Treharris had put up a better fight than in the first half. Still the equalising goal was rather a surprise when it did come, and was somewhat in the nature of an accident. The ball was within a few feet of the corner flag and two of the home players were on the spot also, with Bob Hawkes on the alert for contingencies. The long grass kept the ball in play, and it was unexpectedly sent across the goalmouth by Tippet, and Witcombe dashing up at the same moment headed it into the net. The Luton defence was certainly caught napping, but Mitchell was in no way to blame, for it was by him like a flash off Witcombe's head.

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For a time this unexpected success gave the home players such encouragement that they made one or two attempts to take the lead, but the Luton defenders were not to be caught again, and five minutes later Fred Hawkes gave his side the lead again with a fine cross drive all along the ground. There was still twenty-five minutes to play, but it was pretty certain the Treharris players were not capable of putting the result in danger for a second time, and they simply laid themselves out to defend, and in this they succeeded, Luton getting the points by the lowest margin. It is only fair to mention that Rollinson netted the ball on another occasion from a well-executed movement, but after giving the goal, the referee was induced to consult the linesman on the far side of the field, with the result that the ball was brought back almost to the centre of the field for a free kick for hands against someone, which incident must have occurred quite a minute before.

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As will be gathered from the remarks already made, the game was far from a good one, and Luton players will not take a deal of credit for such a narrow victory. Still, the ground conditions were such that it is always possible for a big turn-up to occur at Treharris. The confined space gives even a decent long kick from one goal more opportunity for a breakaway, and provided it falls luckily, it is always possible for a forward lying well out to have a clean run into goal.

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The Luton forwards were very disappointing and never once got into their stride. They played too close a game, and seemed always to be in each other's way, while the shooting was far from first-class; indeed, the best attempts at goal came from Bob and Fred Hawkes, so far as power were concerned. Mitchell had really only one shot, other than the goal, which gave him any anxiety, and both backs did well, Jarvie being much safer than in some recent games. He timed his rushes better altogether. Elvey, however, was the cleaner kick under pressure.

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The Luton halves all did their part, but Fred Hawkes was the star artiste of the game both in defence and attack. At times he seemed to be taking the whole responsibility on his shoulders, so whole-heartedly did he go into the fray, and it was most gratifying to his comrades when he pulled the game out of the rut it seemed likely to stick at by his fine goal. He has been often criticised for his attempts at scoring, but he secured one of the best when it was required, and thereby maintained Luton at the head of the table with every possible point.

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Treharris are a poor side, as their position proves, and with the exception of Demmery, Timmins, Pike, and the two wingers, they do not possess any players up to Second Division strength. Of course, this should have made Luton's task all the easier, but, as often happens in football, the poor opposition affected the others, and as it did not seem to require a deal of effort, it was not put out, with the result that only a bare victory was recorded.