

LUTON LOSE THEIR UNBEATEN RECORD.

A Poor Show at Llanelly.

Quite early in the season it was apparent the Llanelly fixture would prove the first real hurdle for Luton in the race for promotion, and so it has proved, although no one, not even in Wales, was prepared for such a heavy defeat. Still the whole of the forecasts were in favour of the Scarlets, and apparently Luton had no chance whatever to retain their proud record of full points for each match. The match programme announcement was also very confident of the success of the Scarlets, and stated that although only four goals had been scored against Luton to date, before night had fallen at least a couple more would be placed in the column which records the goals against. The match was generally looked upon as the most important Second Division match of the day, and, but for the early start consequent upon the advent of November, there would have been a record gate.

Luton naturally relied upon the team which gave such a good show the previous Saturday, while Llanelly were at full strength, with the exception of Bird at outside left, who is unwell. The team is pretty much the same as last season, Forge, who has gone to Bristol City, being the principal absentee, while the only newcomer of known reputation is Curtis, who used to play at West Ham, and for a time with Southend, chiefly at centre forward. He filled the same position with Llanelly at the start of the season, but has been off through injuries, and Freeman has fastened on to his old position, Curtis on Saturday figuring at inside left, Payne going outside.

Llanelly in many ways is the most tiring journey of the season, and a change was made in the travelling arrangements, inasmuch as Swansea was made the headquarters on Friday night, with a view to making the Saturday morning journey shorter, although Cardiff was the sleeping place after the match. Llanelly people complain pretty loudly of the treatment they receive from the Great Western Railway, and, just now when certain extensions are contemplated on the Fishguard route, they propose to bring pressure to bear with a view to effecting some improvement. Although only some sixty miles from Cardiff, and the kick-off was three o'clock, it was impossible to reach the South Wales metropolis until nearly eleven o'clock at night. The teams were constituted as under:—

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

Llanelly:—Bailiff; Bracher and James; Gough, Martin and Norris; Osborne, Groves, Freeman, Curtis and Payne.

Referee, Mr. J. Palmer, Bristol.

As the home team took the field, the band struck up the local war song, "Sospan Fach," and as Martin won the toss Luton had to play against the wind, but what was an even worse handicap was the dazzling sun which was setting in the west almost directly in line with the eyes of the Luton players, and it was very difficult to judge the ball. Just before the interval the sun went down, and the Scarlets had no such handicap to contend with in the second half.

Llanelly opened strongly, and a long pass to Payne gained them much ground, but Fred Hawkes came along and neatly robbed them of the ball. Pressure by Llanelly ended in the ball going over the bar. Following the kick-off, Luton forwards forced the game for the first time, and Simms worked into a promising position, but, in going through, he handled the ball, and the referee gave the locals the benefit of a free kick about twelve yards away from the home goal, and this brought Llanelly much-needed relief, for it looked as though a goal was pretty certain.

Then the Scarlets had a share of misfortune when Curtis, getting in a fine header, saw the ball land on the top of the net, a very near thing indeed. The referee was giving the home players the benefit of free kicks pretty liberally, and from one of these, when Osborne tried a long shot, Mitchell brought off a good save. Luton forced a couple of corners, but did not seem able to control the ball under pressure, and both were easily disposed of. A breakaway by the Scarlets found Mitchell standing in the breach, and he picked up in fine style, but was badly tripped by Groves, and the referee gave Luton a free kick. Luton goal had a decided let off when Elvey let Curtis through very close in, but apparently the local player was so surprised at the easy opportunity that he missed the ball altogether, and Mitchell did not even have the chance to show his skill. It was a very lucky miss for Luton.

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A pretty run as a result of a nice pass out from Simms to Wilkie was about the best effort of Luton up to this point, and Bailiff earned the thanks of the crowd by making a brilliant save. Hereabouts Luton were doing better, and forced another corner, but again Bailiff proved his worth with a grand punch right over the heads of a crowd of players. Wileman, going through on one occasion, was fouled badly, but managed to shake off the effects of this, and was in a good position for shooting when the game was stopped and a free kick given—a decision which helped Llanelly rather than Luton. A minute later, another poor ruling on the part of the referee undoubtedly had a big influence on the result, for a goal at this stage would probably have proved the turning point. Simms was going through nicely, and Wileman, who was certainly behind the centre forward, also got clear of the backs, and it seemed nothing but bad shooting could stop a goal, when the referee blew his whistle and gave offside, apparently against Wileman, for Simms had brought the ball from midfield himself. Another raid by the Luton forwards caused the home defenders considerable trouble, until Wileman was deliberately pushed off the ball in the penalty area, but no notice was taken of the incident, although a clearer case for a penalty kick it was impossible to imagine. Just before half-time Frith was stunned in heading the ball away, and Wilson came on the field to bring his comrade round, Lawson having just gone behind to prepare for the interval. The "assistant," however, was equal to the emergency, and Frith did not leave the field until the referee called half-time, with the score—Luton 0, Llanelly 0.

The Scarlets opened the second half in a fashion similar to the first, and tried rushing tactics, without any result at this stage. Jarvie came in for a lot of hooting for a straightforward charge on Osborne, who fell to the ground. The spectators loudly clamoured for the Luton player to be sent off, but for once the referee gave a fair ruling and threw the ball up. After Luton had forced a corner, which Bailiff saved in his best style, the turning point of the game came along. It was twelve minutes after changing over. A sudden breakaway found Curtis with the ball practically on his own, but in an offside position. He was allowed to go on and get in a low drive near the upright, which Mitchell touched but could not prevent entering the net.

This goal excited the spectators to an extent Lutonians would never imagine, and the "Sospan Fach" was in full swing for several minutes. Indeed, from this point to the end of the game, the home players went about their work in the most competent style, and a regular roar was kept up by the delighted spectators, which seemed to inspire the players to such an extent that they never allowed any Luton player to get a kick at the ball if there was the slightest chance to get anywhere near themselves. It was not long before Llanelly got a second goal, and the game was settled, for the home side were now playing in irresistible style. Groves was the scorer of this point,

but he was a wee trifle lucky, for, although in a nice position, he really miskicked, and the ball went into goal at a different angle from that which was expected.

Luton were mainly on the defensive now, and the slightest slip was a source of danger. Jarvie took a second too long in getting the ball away, and it was promptly sent over to Curtis, who netted with a brilliant shot, which Mitchell just touched as it flew into the net. One or two efforts were certainly made by Luton to at least reduce the margin, and one shot from Simms seemed likely to bring this about, but Bailiff brought off the save of the match by tipping the ball over for a corner, which came to nothing. Result: Llanelly 3, Luton 0.

COMMENTS ON THE PLAY AND PLAYERS.

The game was won by sheer dash, helped along by the enthusiasm communicated to the players by the crowd, who urged them on from the moment the first goal was scored. The Scarlets were smarter in getting the ball along, the Lutonians being completely knocked off their usual game and needing too long to think about what they would do. The Luton forwards would not have been recognised as the same line which played such a brilliant game the previous Saturday, for not one of them played up to their reputation.

The most effective players on the Luton side would be Fred Hawkes and Jarvie, although the latter did better in the first half than later, while Mitchell and Frith did all that could reasonably be asked of them, and were not responsible for the crushing defeat.

Llanelly shaped like a winning team all the second half, and were strong in all departments. Undoubtedly Bailiff inspires great confidence, and is the idol of the spectators, while both backs played a good game. The halves are a serviceable trio, without any particular brilliance, while the forwards made up for lack of individual skill by the whole-hearted manner in which they took their chances when the referee's fortunate ruling gave them their chance.

Luton will be engaged next Saturday at Pontypridd in the Southern League, the fixture having been brought forward from January 31st, and incidentally freeing the date fixed for the second round in the Competition Proper of the English Cup.

FOOTBALL NOTES AND NEWS.

By "Vigilant."

LUTON LOSE THE LEAD IN THE SECOND DIVISION.

It has come at last. The Luton Town team last week flattered only to deceive. On Wednesday they went to Portsmouth four short of their full strength and in a fine game defeated what was almost a full First Division Southern League team, but on Saturday the eleven which performed so brilliantly against Abertillery failed to uphold the Blues' winning record in Wales. Llanelly were generally regarded as the stiffest proposition Luton have had to contend with in the Second Division campaign this season, in view of the fact that they claimed five points out of a possible eight, but we were hoping for one point there, and a three goals defeat came as very disappointing news. With Brentford resting, in consequence of Mid-Rhondda being engaged in the F.A. Cup Competition, the thoughts of Lutonians naturally centred on the doings of the only other unbeaten team, Croydon Common. They were playing at Caerphilly, and therefore they looked to have almost as severe a task as Luton, but they seem to have risen to the occasion in fine style. They early went ahead, and although at half-time the score was level the Robins attacked so strongly in the second half that it was only the goalkeeping of Bateman, the old Lutonian, which compelled them to go to the last five minutes before they registered the winning goal. Luton thus give way to Croydon at the head of affairs, by virtue of the Robins' superior goal average, and Stoke, who scored 5-1 at home against the luckless Treharris, are only a point behind.

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Luton originally had next Saturday open, but the blank date has been filled by bringing forward the match at Pontypridd from January 31st, the date of the second round of the F.A. Cup Competition Proper. Pontypridd were at home to Mardy on Saturday, and won 3-0. The positions in the table to date are therefore as under:—

	P.	W.	L.	D.	F.	A.	P.
Croydon Common (4) ...	8	6	0	2	18	4	14
Luton Town (5) ...	8	7	1	0	22	7	14
Stoke... ..	8	6	1	1	20	6	13
Brentford	6	6	0	0	24	3	12
Swansea (3)	6	3	1	2	11	3	8
Llanelly (6)	5	3	1	1	9	5	7
Pontypridd (7)	7	2	2	3	7	4	7
Caerphilly	8	2	4	2	6	19	6
Newport (10)	6	1	2	3	5	8	5
Mardy (11)... ..	7	1	3	3	7	8	5
Aberdare (9)	4	2	2	0	7	8	4
Barry	6	1	4	1	6	19	3
Abertillery	7	1	5	1	5	15	3
Mid-Rhondda (8)... ..	5	0	3	2	2	7	2
Ton Pentre (13)	6	0	4	2	2	15	2
Treharris (12)... ..	8	0	7	1	3	23	1

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Misfortune seems to be dogging the footsteps of the Second Division clubs in South Wales this season. Several of them have severely suffered financially, and will doubtless continue to suffer for some time, from the colliery disaster which recently occasioned such fearful loss of life at Senghenydd, and last week brought a further calamity in the same district in the form of a tornado, accompanied by lightning and flooding, which wrecked houses and chapels, plunged Caerphilly and other towns in the Aber valley in darkness, caused tramway services at Pontypridd and other places to be suspended, and did damage to property to an amount approximating to £50,000. The hurricane was also attended by loss of life, and as a result Ton Pentre, whom Luton have to visit on Saturday week, have been bereft of a player who is described as having been the star man of their team. It seems that the Ton Pentre team were walking to Treharris station on Monday night, on their way home from a match, when Woolford, the right back, who was walking arm-in-arm with the club trainer, was hurled some distance by the force of the storm, and struck by falling masonry, with the result that his skull was fractured, and he died next day without recovering consciousness. He was only 21 years of age, and had been married but three weeks. A native of Swindon, he had played in the Swindon Southern League team in previous seasons, this being his first year with Ton Pentre. Breeze, the trainer, sustained two broken ribs, and several of the other players were carried off their feet and slightly injured.