

Southern League Div. II.

LLANELLY v. LUTON.

Played at Llanelly on Saturday. Result:—

Llanelly	3 goals.
Luton	nil.

The teams were as follow:—

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).

When Luton journeyed to Portsmouth last week they were commencing a series of matches which entail travelling over 2,000 miles before again appearing at home. The opening fixture was very satisfactory, and hopes were entertained that the prolonged tour would result in retaining their unbeaten Southern League certificate, although it was realised they were up against the stiffest proposition, so far as the Welsh clubs were concerned, of the present season at Llanelly. Still, a division of points was at least expected, and therefore the heavy defeat came as a surprise. In South Wales circles it was confidently prophesied Luton would receive their first check, but even there such a result as 3—0 would have been thought impossible before the match.

Luton naturally turned out the same team which had earned the fine victory the previous week, although Donaghy had practically recovered from his injury and was prepared to play. He was at Paddington when the party left, and was evidently disappointed at not having a game. A change was made in the travelling arrangements, and the players went right through to Swansea on Friday night, which only left a comparatively short journey on Saturday before the match. Although on the main Fishguard route, Llanelly has a very poor service, and is one of the worst places for even the majority of Welsh clubs to get to.

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The playing pitch is full size, and in this respect presents no handicap, but last season about one-third of the area was a regular swamp, and on that side the field is still far from ideal. On the whole, however, it is the best playing pitch Luton have visited in South Wales so far this season, so there is no excuse on that score for the defeat. The kick-off was very early for Wales, being at three o'clock, and the gate was not so large as expected until well after the start, but at the finish there would be about 2,500 spectators, although the published attendance was 5,000.

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The sun was greatly in evidence when the teams came out, and as Bob Hawkes lost the toss it meant Luton were compelled to face it, and up to the interval they were considerably bothered from this cause.

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The home players went off in great style, and were evidently determined to rush the situation if possible before Luton had settled down. Fortunately, at this stage the Luton defence were very steady, and no real impression could be made. The first time Luton put on pressure they were pulled up by the referee, Simms being judged to have handled the ball as he was forcing his way through the backs.

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This, however, was only a temporary attack, and the home forwards were soon back in the Luton quarters, and Curtis landed the ball on the top of the net when well placed. Matters looked very ominous when a free kick was given against Jarvie, but Mitchell saved the situation at the expense of a corner. This was well placed, but again Mitchell proved equal to the occasion by clawing Osborne's shot close in, and finally pressure was relieved through Osborne getting offside.

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Luton now did a bit of attacking, and two corners were forced in succession without any effective result. The play was pretty fast, and on the whole even, midway in the opening half, both sides striving hard for the leading point. Once or twice Mitchell did well to save his charge, while Bailiff at the opposite end was compelled to make some of his well-known clearances, and he came out in his best style to the delight of the crowd. One save from a centre by Wilkie was loudly cheered, for the Luton forwards had got clear of the backs and only Bailiff stood in the way. The home goalkeeper also did well to punch the ball right over the heads of the Luton forwards following a corner kick forced through Wilkie's play on the left.

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The home right wing were, however, very persistent at this stage, and but for some fine tackling by Jarvie must have forced a goal. But they were eventually beaten back, and a prolonged attack was set up by Luton without anyone getting a clear opening, the ball bouncing about in the home goal area until Rollinson put it just by for a goal kick. Wileman was badly fouled, but recovered himself, and was in a nice position for shooting, when the referee blew for a foul, a diversion which helped the offenders rather than Luton, for they were able to pack their goal and get the ball away. Another promising movement was spoilt by the referee giving offside apparently against Wileman when Simms was making his way well into goal, but as Wileman kept behind the centre-forward it was a bit difficult to understand the ruling.

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Payne had a fine chance for the home side towards the interval to get in a shot, but he fired the ball right over the bar, although as it happened it would not have counted, as the referee placed the ball for offside. The last exciting incident before half-time was the result of a corner kick for Llanelly, which Frith headed out of goal, and the ball came to Bob Hawkes, who had an easy chance to clear, and was about to send it up the field when Frith was noticed to fall, being badly stunned, and the game was stopped. It would have been very hard lines for Luton if this stoppage had resulted in a goal, for the ball was thrown up a very little way from goal, and might easily have bounced through.

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Having kept a clean sheet while facing the sun and wind, it was expected Luton would be able to retain their record on turning round. It is true the sun had lost its power to a great extent, and the Scarlets were not handicapped as Luton were when playing from that end of the field. But, as in the first half, Llanelly went off with a bang, and just over ten minutes' play gave them the opening goal, and this proved the turning point of the game, for Luton never recovered from the reverse. Strong appeals were made that the Llanelly left wing were offside, but the referee would have none of it, and a goal it was. Curtis was the lucky scorer, and

great was the jubilation around the ropes. Before the Luton players got over the resentment at what they thought to be the unfairness of the decision, another goal had been registered against them, Groves being the one to put the ball in the net by means of what was probably a miskick, for Mitchell had planted himself in position for dealing with Groves' shot, and practically blocked the way for a direct attempt, but the ball skidded off the player's boot and went in at a different angle altogether. It was a very lucky goal indeed, but none the less effective.

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There was still twenty - five minutes left for play, but so well were the Scarlets playing it was next to impossible to expect a sudden change, and Luton were a beaten side. Although once or twice they made an attack, they failed to keep it up, and a brilliant goal from Curtis made the score into three, Mitchell just touching the ball as it flew through at a terrific pace. The last ten minutes Luton certainly made desperate efforts to at least get one goal, if only to keep the record of scoring in every match, but Bailiff played in brilliant style, one save from Simms being a remarkable effort, and the end came with Llanelly leading by three clear goals.

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There were stages in the game when the result hung in the balance, and if the referee had awarded Luton a penalty in the first half when Wileman was deliberately pushed off the ball when about to shoot, quite a different result might have come about, as it would have given Luton players confidence for the remaining stages of the game. But the offside goal soon after turning round had such an effect on the players of both sides that it can be reasonably claimed this point settled the result. For sheer dash no side this season have come up to Llanelly, and for this the crowd were undoubtedly responsible, for they kept up a continued roar of encouragement from the moment the first goal was allowed.

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The Scarlets were quicker and smarter altogether, and quite knocked the Lutonians off their game, and only one or two of the latter side played up to their reputation. As a forward line they were miles below their Abertillery form, and only Wileman seemed capable of holding his own with the home defenders in a tussle for possession. Fred Hawkes again did all that could be reasonably expected, while Frith worked his hardest to stem disaster, coming to the assistance of his backs whenever they were hard pressed. Jarvie, particularly in the first half, played a grand defensive game, and Mitchell was not to blame for the disaster in any way, and might easily have been beaten oftener without disgrace. Altogether, it was a dull November day for Luton, and the players themselves were very down-hearted at the finish at the unexpected result, for there is no doubt whatever they have set their minds on promotion this season, and recognise they will now have a much harder task than anticipated.

Caerphilly, 1; Croydon, 2.

Stoke, 5; Treharris, 1.

Pontypridd, 3; Mardy, 0.

FOOTBALL.

Luton's First Defeat.

The sad ceremony of putting a stroke opposite Luton in the third column of the table has had to be performed this week. It was getting quite a nerve-trying ordeal to make alterations week after week in every other column but those under lost and drawn, and now Llanelly have removed that tension—only to create nerve-tension of another sort, for the thought will now be whether there will be constant additions to that dread list. Of course, no one will be pessimistic enough to suggest it is the beginning of the end. There are no doubt those who will say, "I told you so." And there may even be another shock in process of generation at Pontypridd for next Saturday, but at any rate there will be a good chance for recovery on the following Saturday at Ton Pentre, in preparation for the resumption of home matches. There can, however, be no hiding the fact that such a big defeat at Llanelly was a disappointment, and apparently not only to Luton football supporters, but to the Luton players as well. It comes specially hard after such a run of successes. A check to the triumphant progress was bound to come, and after all, Llanelly are not insignificant foes whose triumph adds degradation to defeat, for they hold quite a respectable place in the table. There are only the English clubs and Swansea above them, and Llanelly have played fewer matches than any of these.

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Croydon now take the head of the table because of a slightly better goal average than Luton, but they had quite a difficulty in winning at Caerphilly, where the home team gave one of their best displays. The score was even until the last few minutes, when a free kick against Caerphilly led to Croydon scoring the winning goal. Bateman is stated to have played very cleverly. Stoke, at home, added five to their previous 15 goals, at the expense of Treharris, who seem to exist for the benefit of the goal average of other clubs. True, they did score once, so they have now four goals, but, there, 28 against! Pontypridd, whom Luton have to visit next Saturday, scored three against Mardy. The Luton defence will have to keep their eyes on O'Hara, apparently, for he scored all the goals. Mardy were handicapped for more than half the match through their centre-half, Griffiths, having to be carried off on account of a wrenched knee, but there was some kind of an offset in the fact that Purdy could give but little assistance to Pontypridd all through the second half because of an injury.

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There were two English Cup games in Wales, and they were of a very vigorous nature. Swansea managed to beat Mid Rhondda by the only goal, but Aberdare forced a draw at Newport, where two goals were scored.