

A POINTLESS DRAW.

South Shields' Cup Visit.

Luton fail to beat their old Goalkeeper.

Luton Town have this season had, for them, the unusual fortune of two really attractive Cup-ties at home, both equally favoured by perfect weather conditions, and both equally productive of gratifying gate returns, but there has been one fly in the ointment, for their fortune has stopped short of the consummation most desired of all—two successive Cup wins and the certainty of entry into the competition proper for the National Cup. It has been well said that "tis not for mortals to command success," they can but deserve it, and the most disappointed will probably be ready to grant this consolation to the Luton Town eleven, who battled so courageously against fate on Saturday afternoon. Their cup-tie displays this season have been entirely the reverse of Luton's traditional reputation as feeble cup fighters, and if the wheel of fortune had run anything like evenly on Saturday, their appearance in the first round of the competition proper would certainly not be still resting in the laps of the gods. South Shields proved, as anticipated, foemen thoroughly worthy of their steel, but they owe it entirely to the influence of some occult charm—exercised perhaps by their chubby little mascot—that they live to fight another day, and that the Blues are called upon to face their stiffest cup-tie task this season, a journey to South Shields on Wednesday.

If Luton can only achieve up north what they failed to accomplish on Saturday, this season promises to be the best the Town Club have had for some years in the matter of cup-tie revenue. The South Shields officials are very confident of a bigger gate for the replay than any of Luton's cup-tie gates of this season, and already Luton have never done so well in the last two rounds of the qualifying competition. The Croydon Cup-tie brought in £245, and this figure was eclipsed on Saturday, the gate being returned at a few shillings short of £270. It speaks volumes for the interest excited by the visit of a team which a fortnight ago was quite an unknown quantity in this locality because, unlike the case of the Croydon Common match, the crowd was one entirely drawn from Luton and the surrounding district. Contrary to reports, there were no excursions run from South Shields—consequent upon the refusal of the Club to guarantee numbers to the railway company—and the visiting team were only accompanied by a mere handful of officials and supporters. Still the ground has never been so well-filled this season and, in spite of the unusually early start—not too early, as the failing light in the closing stages proved—there were nearly ten thousand spectators present when the teams lined out as under:—

Luton: Mitchell; Elvey, Jarvie; F. Hawkes, Frith, Bob Hawkes; Durrant, Wileman, Simms, Rollinson, Wilkie.

South Shields: Naisby; Wood, Johnson; Ben Hall, E. Hall, Brooks; Keenlyside, Thornley, Bridgett, Anderson, Arthur.

Referee, Mr. J. H. Linthwaite, Leicester.

The appearance of the Luton team was awaited with the keenest interest, because the uncertainty as to the composition of the side, which had prevailed, and created endless discussion throughout the week was not even removed by the names on the match card. Earlier in the week Frith's bad throat, and the strain of the thigh muscles which occasioned the absence of Wileman from the Pontypridd game, had made both these players doubtful starters, but both were reported fit on Friday, the inside-right doing all that was required of him in the thorough testing to which he was subjected on the previous day. The uncertainty, therefore, ranged round the three positions of right back, left-half, and outside-right, and doubtless because of the keen differences of opinion concerning the claims of the respective players for these berths the composition of the side was not finally settled until the morning of the match. As I said last week, there is not the slightest doubt there will be many critics of the Directors' decision in one respect or another but, as readers know, the choice made bore out my anticipations. They involved three changes from the side which defeated Croydon Common, Elvey being preferred for Robinson, Bob Hawkes for Wilson, and Durrant for Donaghy. It was the first time Luton have actually had this team out, and in my view it is the strongest available on present form.

South Shields were the first out, and the team led by Arthur Bridgett, the ex-Sunderland International, was exactly the same as beat Hartlepool United by the only goal scored in the previous

tion from his old Luton friends when he took up his position in goal, but what excited most interest of all was the visitors' mascot. This was a chubby little fellow, some six or seven years old, dressed up in football rig, and the South Shields' colours, who hopped on the field with a football and, making his way to the goal left waiting for the Luton team, amused himself and the crowd by showing how South Shields can shoot goals. He had an appreciative reception, and after netting the ball once or twice—without any opposition to bar his way—he trotted round the field with the ball to the opposite goal, where he joined in a kick or two with the visiting players.

Then the Red Cross Band ceased, the mascot departed, and the referee settled the teams down to serious business. The crowd were bursting with expectancy, and enthusiasm, but there was no bursting of the barriers or fencing this time, because all the weak places seemed to have been repaired. And no incidents of this kind were wanted to enliven matters, for the contest was what the regular football follower would call a "topping" one from start to finish. It had no more resemblance to the Croydon Common game than chalk has to cheese. Both sides went in for football, and it was tip-top, exhilarating football of a stamp not often seen in cup-ties, nearly the whole way through the ninety minutes. There was, of course, plenty of keenness too, but on the whole it was wonderfully well restrained. Fouls were the exception rather than the rule, and only once was there a stoppage for injuries—and that quite towards the close. Occasionally the crowd did not like either the tactics of some of the visitors or the rulings of the referee, but generally speaking it was quite an ideal cup-tie.

The crowd had not long to wait before obtaining a glimpse of the attacking ability of the North Eastern League leaders. Talking to one another in their short, sharp North-country twanged sentences, the forwards and halves swung the ball from one to another with clock-work precision, and the close passing indulged in was as rapid as it was pretty. It was perfect combination, and before five minutes had elapsed there must have been many wondering whether the Luton defence would stand the strain. Twice the left wing got dangerous, and on the second occasion Arthur completely outwitted Elvey, but Frith came to the rescue, and gave a corner. Luton raised the siege, but this temporary relief nearly brought about their undoing, thanks to a mistake by the referee. Thornley was allowed to break away from the centre of the field in an off-side position, and persistently as Jarvie tried to baulk him he could not succeed. His only consolation was that he hurried Thornley's shot and caused it to be taken at such a range that Mitchell just got to it on the ground against the post, and gave a corner. The visitors were not making good use of their corners, and considering the persistency with which play ruled in the Luton half, Mitchell was not overworked. This, however, was due to the grand work of Frith and Jarvie, backed up by Elvey's stubbornness. Frith had Bridgett literally in his pocket, and still found time to do much useful defending, while Jarvie was at all times brilliant, steady and full of resource.

Still the crowd had a bad quarter of an hour before the Luton forwards jumped into the picture, and it was really remarkable how the game turned round once the homesters had got the measure of their opponents. The attack was at first a trifle scrappy, but the right wing was in great trim, and near goal the Blues were lots more threatening than their opponents. Wileman had the first shot at Naisby, from a capital movement, in which Simms and the right wing were associated, and Durrant seemed to be at once marked out as dangerous, for when next he beautifully got away, he was the victim of a bad foul by Brooks. The free kick would probably have meant the visitors' undoing if Simms had left it to Rollinson instead of attempting an impossible header. As it was the ball went along to Wilkie, who missed a shooting chance by faulty trapping, and had to sky the ball into goal. It was headed away, and Durrant took it on the volley, and sent one of his "specials" flying over the bar. This was the first time the Blues had really been dangerous, and the completeness with which they tied up the Northerners' defence was promising. It would have been even more promising if Luton could only have taken advantage of it at the critical moment, when the golden opportunity presented itself. Durrant was lucky to beat down a clearance by Johnson, and unexpectedly finding himself in possession he ran on close to the line and sharply centred low down. Simms met it right on top of the goal, and Naisby was helpless, but the rapidity of the rush and the pace of the centre made the use of judgment almost impossible and, disappointing as it was, the centre could scarcely be blamed for not catching the ball right with the result that it flicked over

the bar.

After this lucky escape the visitors had a little more say in the matter, and Mitchell did well to fist away a corner, while Bob Hawkes—whose heading someone in the Pressbox facetiously described as one of the features of the game—twice cleverly baulked Bridgett once after and once before he could fasten on centres from Arthur. The ball was not, however, long at the Luton end, and after Simms and Wileman had unluckily muddled a centre from Bob Hawkes, Durrant once more initiated a movement from which the visitors had the luckiest escape of the game. Rollinson headed in from the centre, and the ball seemed to more hit Naisby by accident than anything else. It rebounded to Simms, and he had a couple of tries as Naisby rushed out of goal. The first Naisby certainly saved, but the second was just as certainly another case of the ball striking him. Anyhow he cleared after one of the luckiest sequence of saves any goalkeeper could possibly make. Still it came just at the right moment for him, and gave him that confidence which enables a goalkeeper to do nothing but the right thing.

Luton were now carrying all before them, and doing everything but scoring. They literally bombarded the Shields' goal, and their shooting was pretty deadly, but find the net they could not. Simms once got clean through, but even if he had not been given offside Naisby saved what looked to be a certain scorer. Simms also had a header at close quarters cleverly saved by Tommy, and Durrant, who was playing brilliantly in spite of foul attentions by the opposing half, had a beautiful screw shot literally kicked out of Naisby's hands by Wood, and skied into the air. Simms and Wileman, heading together a centre from Wilkie, landed the ball just under the bar,

but Naisby tipped it over, and Simms, sent straight through by a forward pass, lunged a terrific drive to Naisby's left, which the goalkeeper knocked down in really wonderful style. The old Lutonian's work did not end here, for from a corner-kick by Durrant he successfully combatted a movement, which would have meant the undoing of nine goalkeepers out of ten. As the ball came away from the ruck of players, Wileman aimed a left-foot shot for the far post. It was going wide when Rollinson turned it towards the other end of the goal, but still Naisby was there. If ever a team deserved an interval lead, it was Luton, but when half-time was sounded the score was:—

Luton 0, South Shields 0.

Luton went off as strong as ever in the second half, and as they were attacking at their favourite scoring end it was hoped goals would at last come. Bob Hawkes quickly forced a corner, but Naisby was equal to Rollinson, and even when Simms upset him as he came out to get away a centre from Wilkie, Ellis Hall happened to be handy, and came to the rescue. Another centre from Wilkie was headed into Naisby's hands by Simms, and this time the ball was never really got clear. Durrant met it in the corner of the penalty area, and shot hard, and Brooks palpably met the ball with upstretched arms. Durrant was very confident in his appeal for a penalty, and the referee did not at all like the persistency with which he and Simms challenged his decision not to entertain it, with the result that words passed over the incident. This made the play very exciting, and the crowd became particularly demonstrative when a few minutes later the whistle-holder would not entertain another appeal for a penalty foul on Durrant, when he was meeting a centre from Wilkie.

Luton's persistent attack lasted quite a quarter of an hour, and during that time Bob Hawkes sent a fine long shot over the post, and Naisby successfully negotiated a free-kick drive similar to that with which Bob scored against Pontypridd, while he also ran out and cleverly cleared a centre from Durrant. It was the last of Luton's supremacy though. The visitors suddenly picked up, and reproduced their early form, and the Luton defence had the most anxious time they had experienced. Mitchell was twice tested by Arthur, and though much of the Shields finishing work was patchy they were nevertheless dangerous. Frith once came to the rescue very acceptably, when a scrimmage seemed likely to lead to the dreaded result, and Bridgett had, on another occasion, practically worked through, when Frith and Elvey defended so superbly that the danger was ended. A free-kick for off-side gave Luton relief after five very anxious minutes, and Durrant then broke away strongly. He was once beaten ball, and bearing in, shot, only to find that by the back, but close to the line he recovered the Naisby had anticipated a dangerous movement.

For their final effort the visitors re-arranged their attacking force, Bridgett going outside-left, Thornley centre, and Arthur inside-right, and the new formation was nearly always aggressive, and giving trouble. There was, however, just one brief period during which the least fraction of luck would have given Luton the victory. Naisby had finely saved a free-kick shot from Fred Hawkes, and a beauty from Wilkie, when Simms drove in a long ranger. It was quite the finest shot of the day, and it was too good for Naisby, but it was just a trifle too high, and striking the cross-bar, it tipped over. Rather a good chance was lost from a centre by Wilkie, through the ball being negotiated at too close quarters, but for the rest of the game the visitors had the best of matters, and the Luton goal was frequently in danger right up to the end. In the last three minutes Bridgett got away on the left, and Mitchell made a magnificent full-length save from the Shields captain's cross shot. Shields continued to keep up the pressure right until the final whistle went, with the score:—

Luton 0, South Shields 0.

COMMENTS ON THE PLAY AND PLAYERS.

Choice of ground means a very great deal in a cup-tie, as every footballer knows, but on Saturday's form there can be no justification for pessimism concerning Luton's chances in the replay. At any rate, if South Shields win, they will be an extremely lucky side to enter the competition proper, for if ever a team deserved success on the run of a game, it was Luton Town, on Saturday. South Shields are without question a class side—the best perhaps seen against Luton this season—and their first quarter of an hour's display was sufficient to explain their reputation

in the circles in which they are accustomed to play, but the Blues never more completely measured up a team which, at one time, looked vastly superior. Their overwhelming superiority in the first half justified an interval lead of at least two goals. Even though this was not forthcoming, the Blues invariable knack of finishing games strongly inspired confidence in the final result. Their second-half rally was not, however, such a pronounced feature as usual. It lasted only a quarter of an hour and passed off still without result, and thereafter the superiority of the Blues disappeared. They were nearly always the more dangerous side near goal, but their attacks were but spasmodic, and towards the end the Luton defence had to struggle hard for the right to a second bid for victory. Still, on the whole, there can be no two opinions that a draw was a result greatly flattering to South Shields, and it was the irony of fate that the one man who barred Luton's way to victory was their old goalkeeper, Tommy Naisby.

Without detracting from his display, it must be said that it was not altogether his fault that Luton did not win. He made many wonderful saves, and did not commit a single error of judgment, but with all these attributes he could never have saved his side in the miraculous manner he frequently did if he had not been blessed with one of those lucky days, which are said to come to every goalkeeper. Naisby played not a few brilliant games when he was with Luton, but never once did he give such a wonderful exhibition as Saturday's, and if it was not an exaggeration of his average form this season it is easy to understand why he has displaced Cartlidge, and why South Shields possess such a fine record. Their backs are a sturdy, reliable pair, who hardly ever faltered, and their halves are sound, without being especially noteworthy, but as a division, the forwards are unquestionably the strongest. Arthur Bridgett was too well shadowed by Frith to figure very prominently, and he did best when he removed to the position in which he made his name—outside-left—but the clever touches and fine generalship with which he kept the whole line together showed that he is still a power to be reckoned with, if not kept closely roped in. Anderson and Thornley were, however, the two "star" men of the line, and of the two Anderson was perhaps the best inside forward on the field. He is a Scottish importation, who is in his first season with South Shields, and though on the small side, he seems a player likely to soon figure in the best class football.

On the Luton side, a good deal of interest naturally centred in the doings of the players occupying the three positions for which competitions seems to have become pretty keen. Of two of them, there can hardly be any two opinions. From first to last, Durrant justified in the completest fashion possible the views of those who predicted that he would be a pronounced addition to the Luton forward line. He was early marked out by the opposing defenders as a dangerous customer, and, in spite of attentions which were not always of the fairest character, he created more goal-scoring opportunities than any forward on the field. His was a magnificent display all through, and stamps him as unquestionably Luton's star winger. Bob Hawkes was also an unqualified success. Opposed to clever forwards, he was in his element in beating science with science, and quite apart from the value of his defensive work, into which he brought far more headplay than is his wont, there was no player who tried harder to win the game for Luton than Bob. Elvey was not so completely satisfactory. He kicked splendidly in the early part of the game, but there were, later on, stages when he did not display his accustomed steadiness and care.

Of the other players, those standing out were Jarvie and Frith. Jarvie has not this season been consistently making good the reputation he gained when first he came to Luton last season, but on Saturday he played what must have been one of the games of his life. Time after time he met opposing attacks single-handed with all the confidence and assurance in the world, and he was never once at fault in either his kicking, tackling, or judgment. It was quite the best game he has played at Luton, and the local crowd will assuredly hope to see more of this brilliant form. Frith also loomed large in the work of the defence because of the thoroughness and success with which he "bottled" up Bridgett, and generally come to the rescue in critical emergencies. As usual, he was not so much to the fore as his half-back colleagues in assisting the forward line, and here Fred Hawkes excelled, working finely with Durrant and Wileman. The latter did not get many of those opportunities which bring out his individuality, and next to Durrant, Simms was the most serviceable forward. He worked like a Trojan, and both as a leader and as a shot he gave further evidences of the improvement he seems to make with every game. Wilkie was below par, and his partner suffered accordingly, but, as always, Rollinson got through a deal of useful work. Mention must also be made of Mitchell, who, though overshadowed by the charmed existence Naisby enjoyed, did equally fine work when the occasion demanded it, and brilliantly averted defeat in the last few minutes of the game.

FOOTBALL NOTES AND NEWS.

By "Vigilant."

LUTON'S CUP DRAW.

Latest Tidings about the Aberdare Club

"Luton Town or South Shields" figures in one of the lines of the result of the draw, made at the headquarters of the Football Association in London this afternoon, for the first round of the competition proper of the F.A. Cup, which has to be decided on January 10th. Although Luton are by no means certainties for the competition proper as yet, the result of the draw is awaited with none the less interest, and it will be posted on the window of the "Reporter" office in Manchester-square as soon as possible after the draw is made known.

* * *

Whether the draw does or does not actually effect Luton will not be known, at the earliest, until Wednesday evening, because Luton have to go to South Shields after all—and without any such blandishments as the £500 plus half the gate which Luton wanted, or the £250 plus hotel and travelling expenses which South Shields were prepared to give for the match to be played at South Shields in the first instance. It is not by any means a hopeless task with which Luton are confronted in having to go north, but still it must be recognised that it is a pretty stiff one. The meteoric rise of South Shields has been one of the features of north country football during the past two seasons. The improvement in the team has dated from the appointment of Arthur Bridgett, the old Sunderland player—who on Saturday played his second goalless cup draw at Luton—to the position of manager. This is his second season with the club, and last season they finished second in the North-Eastern League above the reserve teams of Newcastle, Sunderland and Middlesborough. It was also the first season they came to the fore as cup fighters, as they went through all the qualifying rounds and were beaten in the competition proper by Gainsborough Trinity after an abandoned game, in which they were leading. This year they are the leaders of the North-Eastern League, with a record of 15 played, 11 won, 1 lost, 3 drawn, 39 goals for, 12 goals against, 25 points. In the F.A. Cup Competition they, like Luton, gained exemption until the fourth qualifying round, in which they overcame Hartlepool United, on the Hartlepool ground, by the only goal scored.

* * *

The replay is to take place at South Shields on Wednesday afternoon, and in all probability the teams will be exactly the same as played the pointless draw at Luton on Saturday. The Blues, at any rate, are contemplating relying on the team, although it is probable that all the players will be taken for the trip to provide against any unforeseen contingencies. The team will leave Luton tomorrow, and stay the night in Newcastle, and the journey home will be undertaken through Wednesday night, Luton being reached again between three and four o'clock on Thursday morning. In the event of a draw, an extra half-hour has to be played in the replay, and doubtless because of this the South Shields officials were anxious to secure a start at a quarter to two. Luton, however, have insisted on the time fixed by the F.A.—two o'clock. The home club are not at all anxious for a third replay next week on top of their heavy Christmas programme—but one never knows!

* * *

One thing that is in Luton's favour is that the pitch at South Shields is said to be a very good one—better, in fact, than ours at Luton. The ground has been enlarged, and a new grand stand built since the beginning of last season, so that quite 15,000 can be accommodated, and their crowds represent more money than at Luton because of the grand stand accommodation. Gates of between seven and ten thousand are usually seen at the Horsley Hill ground, and the South Shields officials seem to think that they would have had the place full had the match been on their ground on Saturday. In any case, they look forward to a £300 gate for the mid-week replay.

* * *

Luton will, therefore, not do at all badly out of the cup this year even if they do not have a say in the next round. On Saturday the turnstiles registered a few over 9,300 people, and altogether the attendance was about 9,500, about 600 in excess of the number at the Croydon match. The takings were a few shillings over £269. This was not the best return for the cup-ties. Burslem Port Vale did better, and Swansea took £325, even although their opponents were only a northern amateur team called Willington, the place from which hailed a former Luton winger, Norman Brown.

* * *

also