

ONLY ONE GOAL IN THE RETURN.

Two Penalties Saved by Newport Custodian.

Fully ten thousand spectators witnessed the return match at Luton on Boxing Day, in spite of a dull and cheerless sort of afternoon, which was not entirely free from rain, and there was such a tremendous difference in the constitution of the two teams from those which had met at Newport the day before that it is necessary to record the full list of players who lined out under the charge of Mr. H. G. White, of Great Marlow, a referee new to the Town ground.

Luton:—Abbott; Elvey and Jarvie; Fred Hawkes, Frith, and Wilson; Stevens, Brewis, P. Lovell, Bob Hawkes, and Wilkie.

Newport:—McLeod; Bullock and Flanders; Green, Edwards and Preece; Spittle, Payne, Matthews, Enright, and Lindley.

It will be seen that the constitution of the Newport team was altered in no fewer than five positions, although actually there were only two fresh players introduced. Spittle, the regular right back, went to outside right to make room for Bullock, a local amateur; Green, the outside right, shifted to half-back, and Matthews, the old North County forward, returned to the centre to let in at

the inside right Payne, a reinstated amateur, who was
P. once a professional at Ilkeston. The Blues were
26 intending to rest Robinson, Wilson and Donaghy
25 for Elvey, Bob Hawkes and Stevens, but their
23 plans had to be altered in consequences of injuries
22 to Wileman and the sudden illness of Rollinson.
20 Wilson had to keep his place at left half, Brewis
17 moved from centre to inside right, Bob Hawkes
13 took the inside left berth, and "Punch" Lovell, the
13 Clarence amateur, filled the gap at centre forward.
10 Thus only one regular member of the front line was
10 in his accustomed position, and that was Wilkie.

9 Although opening against a strong and choppy
8 cross wind, which played some pretty pranks with
7 the ball, Luton started in such promising style
5 that, thanks to the enterprise exhibited by Bob
4 Hawkes and Lovell, they looked for all the world
4 as if they meant running up another big score
to atone for the reverse at Newport. Lovell quickly
put himself on good terms with the crowd by his
fearless work, and after Fred Hawkes had tested
the goalkeeper with a high shot from a corner
poorly placed by Stevens, Bob Hawkes narrowly
missed the far post with a lovely drive. The visi-
tors were exhibiting the same sturdy defence as on
the previous day, but Flanders was extremely lucky
to clear for a corner when Lovell seemed clear
through, but only seven minutes had gone when
the Newport defence was pierced. The Clarence
amateur prettily got the ball out to the wing, and
although Wilkie did not centre with his accustomed
accuracy, Fred Hawkes met the ball well and gave
it up to Lovell. The amateur was effectively
barred from a shot, try as he would to make an
opening, but following up Bob Hawkes let fly as
the ball came from the back, and scored with a
fine drive just inside the corner.

16 The Luton forwards never afterwards looked back
15 during the first half. The outside wingers were
11 not particularly brilliant, but the inside men were
9 frequently doing clever things, and the Blues'
9 superiority in the field was so marked that there
8 was only once during the half that Abbott had to
7 clear, and then he had to run out to do it. Mc-
6 Leod, on the other hand, was simply inundated
5 with work, and the more he had to do the more
he shone. Lovell, when once sent through by
Brewis with a magnificent pass, shot splendidly,
and brought the goalkeeper to his knees, and the
referee would certainly not have been stretching
the spirit of the law if he had given Luton a
penalty, because after Lovell had shot he was il-
legally brought down, and this prevented him fol-
lowing up when the goalkeeper had failed to clear
at the first attempt. Bob Hawkes was most per-
sistent in testing the goalkeeper, essaying several
fine shots, and Brewis also drove in well from long
range. Bob Hawkes and Lovell were frequently
prominent in unison, and eventually from a clever
centre by Stevens a penalty was given away by
Newport. Elvey was called up to take the kick,
and once more he failed to do for the Town what he
almost consistently did for the Clarence. It was
no fault of his. He shot straight, hard and true for
the inside part of the post, but McLeod got across
the goal with astonishing rapidity and brought off
a wonderful save. The remainder of the half was
not nearly so exciting, for Luton were always
pressing, but there was not so much promise about
their attacks until Bob Hawkes cleverly robbed one
of the visiting defenders and ran clear through into
the penalty area. It looked to be a gift, but Bob
did not shoot as accurately as usual, and a terrific
drive hit the cross bar and returned into play.
Lovell promptly headed back, but this time the
goalkeeper was ready, and so the half-time score
stood:—Luton 1, Newport 0.

Newport restarted with Spittle returning to his
accustomed position, and settled down to play the
one-back game with some degree of success from
their point of view, and with disastrous results to
the game from the onlookers' standpoint. But Bob
Hawkes was quite a match for these tactics. Get-
ting a pretty forward pass from Lovell, he ran
clean through, and the back was in such difficulties
that McLeod had to come to his assistance, and
even then was so much harassed by the Luton
captain that he cleared his line with the utmost
difficulty. On another occasion he gained posses-
sion in the Luton half of the field, and blazing the
ball out to the right, gave Stevens ample oppor-
tunity of showing off his paces. The outside right
was on it like a shot, and was completely clear
when he was deliberately brought down. The crowd
instantly called for Bob to take the penalty
awarded, and the Luton captain acquiesced, but he
was no more fortunate than Elvey. McLeod fisted

Newport were more prominent after this, and frequently threatened danger. The first serious piece of work Abbott had to do was when he ran out some yards and got brilliantly away a centre from Bullock, which was hung up in the wind, and it was a trifle fortunate that a hot return from Green before Abbott had got back into goal was impeded by another of the Newport players. There was another sigh of relief when a terrific free kick shot from Flanders missed the post. Payne was, however, the only Newport player to trouble Abbott with a direct shot, and there was not nearly so much danger from the visitors' attack as when the homesters got going. This they did very strongly in the closing stages. Lovell and Bob Hawkes went through finely with close passing, and when their progress was barred Brewis, following up, just missed the post with a real gem. Then from a breakaway Stevens completely beat Flanders with a really clever dribble cross the goal, only to be brought down most deliberately when in the act of shooting. It was the most obvious penalty of the match, but the referee would not listen to the appeal. Luton had another piece of bad luck. Stevens took the back and goalkeeper by surprise when they were waiting for the ball to go over the line, and promptly hooked it into the centre for Lovell to easily net, but the referee held that it had been out of play. For the rest, the chief feature of the play was the brilliant work of McLeod, whose saves, from Lovell and Bob Hawkes in particular, alone made the final result—Luton 1, Newport 0.

It was not a great game from a football point of view, but still Luton were immeasurably the superior side, and Newport owed the narrowness of the margin solely to the brilliant work of McLeod, who was wanting in nothing. Certainly the Luton forwards could not be blamed for not scoring oftener. Neither of the outside men did particularly well, Stevens being very wild and erratic, but the inside men worked well together, and were ever ready to seize upon opportunities. Bob Hawkes was a huge success in the front line. He was the instigator of nearly all the most dangerous movements, and there was not a player on the field who approached him for cleverness. Lovell also did splendidly in his first Southern League game. He showed to good purpose the value of hustling, and was most unlucky not to be returned as a scorer. Fred Hawkes was as serviceable as ever, and was a big aid to the forwards, while Frith did so much work in defence that the backs had little anxiety, and the goalkeeper practically none. Newport's cleverest forward was Matthews, but it was in defence that they shone, the leading lights being the goalkeeper and Flanders, who although only twenty is a "fine broth of a boy," and reputed to be the biggest kick in the Southern League. At any rate, there are few players who have sent the ball out of the Luton Town ground so often in one game.

FOOTBALL NOTES AND NEWS.

By "Vigilant."

HALF-WAY STAGE IN THE RACE FOR PROMOTION.

Luton's Playing Strength Seriously Depleted.

The half-time stage has been reached in another football season, and the results of the Christmas programme in the Second Division of the Southern League have panned out in such a way that the competition for promotion promises to be of the keenest and most interesting character in the new year. The outstanding features of the holiday games in the Second Division were Brentford's home defeat at the hands of Croydon Common on Christmas morning, and Luton's success on Saturday in breaking the Robins' sequence of home victories in their League games. Both these games excited considerable interest, especially so the match at Brentford, because of the fact that both the contestants had unbeaten Southern League records. The Bees had not dropped a point in nine games, and it is easy to imagine the enthusiasm which must have prevailed among the Common's supporters when their team upset Brentford's record by scoring the only goal in a tremendously exciting match. Five special trains and a score of motor buses from the Croydon district contributed to an extraordinarily enthusiastic crowd at Griffin Park, and there was a memorable scene when ten minutes before the end Barnfather headed the deciding goal. The players were as excited as the crowd, and Barnfather was carried shoulder high by his comrades. According to all accounts, Croydon seem to have been rather lucky to gain both points, for although the Brentford forwards did not distinguish themselves by much ability to accept chances, it seems to be the general view that they did not deserve to lose.

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As their other two holiday games were at Selhurst, the Robins and their supporters were justified, after the sumptuous meal made at the Bees' table on Christmas morning, in looking to them to provide further "braces." It was naturally expected that they would make a short snack of Abertillery on Boxing Day, and the ten thousand spectators who attended at the Nest were plainly infected with a spirit of super-enthusiasm, but they had to bottle up their spirits in the first half, for Abertillery put up a surprisingly stubborn defence, and goals would not come. Within ten minutes of the change of ends the Robins were two goals up, but this was the limit of the scoring, and making all allowance for the capable defence of the Welshmen it was a disappointing performance. Still the greatest disappointment for the Croydon supporters was left until last, in their failure to capture the points from Luton. This was the first set-back they have had at home, and must have been the more galling in that it came from what on paper was a mere shadow of the team which put the Robins out of the cup. As a result, Croydon are only a point ahead of Luton with a game in hand, but nevertheless their prospects of promotion are extremely rosy in that they have disposed of all their most dangerous away games with the solitary exception of Luton. They have been to Stoke, Mid Rhondda, Caerphilly, Llanelly, Swansea, and Brentford without meeting with defeat, and in that respect hold a decided advantage over their rivals.

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Croydon have to go away twice this week, being due at Aberdare on Thursday, and at Barry on Saturday, but unless there is a considerable falling away in form they ought to be almost certain of maintaining their present position as leaders. On paper, at any rate, there would seem to be considerably more doubt as to who will finish second than who will finish first. Luton at present maintain that position, although they did not net as many points as either Brentford or Stoke. The Bees, of course, had the Croydon set-back to put against the overwhelming victory of 7-0 they registered against the luckless Treharris side on Boxing Day, and a win of 3-0 on Saturday over Newport County—a performance which would not show up Luton in a good light were it not for the fact that the Blues had to reckon with a wonderful display of goalkeeping. Stoke, as was expected, gained the maximum number of points from their two games with Caerphilly, winning 4-0 at home, and 5-1 in Wales. Swansea, the only danger among the Welsh teams, did ditto, scoring 4-1 at Treharris on Saturday, after having a hard Boxing Day run at home against Pontypridd, who only lost by the odd goal of three. Pontypridd drew at three goals all on the Mid-Rhondda ground on Christmas Day, but playing at home on Saturday they could only beat Aberdare by the only goal scored. Llanelly had only one match during the holidays, being beaten on the Ton Pentre ground on Saturday by the only goal of the game. Barry were successful at Abertillery by 2-1, and also won 3-2 at home against Aberdare. It will therefore be seen that Aberdare put up two very good performances during the holidays, but they marred these by starting off badly, as at Treharris on Christmas Day they provided that team with their first Second Division success of the season. The score was 4-1, and for the moment Aberdare join Treharris at the bottom of the table. Mardy at home beat Ton Pentre 5-2, and effected a point-less draw on Saturday with Mid-Rhondda, the game between these teams at Mid-Rhondda on Boxing Day being abandoned.

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As for Luton, it was generally agreed that they would do well if they managed to pick up four points, during Christmas, and the fact that they brought off a surprise by drawing at Selhurst on Saturday has, I am afraid, only served to accentuate the feeling of disappointment which the defeat at Newport on Christmas Day occasioned. The inability of the Luton forwards to finish well, and the sterling defence set up by Newport, were the factors which brought about Luton's defeat, for so superior were they in initiating movements and developing them up to a point that they had quite three-quarters of the play, and yet scarcely ever displayed an approach to scoring powers. Abbott, on the other hand, was only tested seriously three times, and twice he had not a ghost of a chance. It was much the same in the return match at Luton, although in this case it was not so much lack of finish among the forwards as sturdy defence and a remarkably fine exhibition of goalkeeping which prevented goals accruing to the number the run of the exchanges warranted. Luton had two penalties, they should have had a third, and they netted the ball twice, but the official result was only 1-0, and towards the end they had to play desperately hard to capture the two points. These two results did not promise very well for the match at Selhurst, especially with the team the Blues were compelled to fall back upon, and the division of points with Groydon Common, besides being a distinct feather in Abbott's cap, will do much to restore the team in the good graces of the local following, and revive hopes of a place among the top two.

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After all, an even division of points for three matches, two of which were looked upon as stiff encounters away from home, is not a bad performance, the more so when one remembers how unlucky Luton have been with their players of late. Not only were Durrant and Mitchell not available for any of the holiday games, but Simms was also still an absentee. The medical certificate sent along to explain his non-arrival in Luton for the match with Aberdare a week ago stated that he was suffering from gastritis, and although the hope was at that time expressed that he would be able to travel by Tuesday nothing more had been heard from him up till Boxing Day, and it is therefore presumed that he is still lying at his home at South Shields unwell. This was bad enough to start with, but on Christmas Day Wileman again had a return of his thigh trouble, and on Boxing Day Rollinson was found in bed suffering from a severe internal cold which rendered it dangerous for him to come out of doors. These difficulties were got over on Boxing Day by Bob Hawkes taking up a position in the forward line, and "Punch" Lovell assisting the Town for the first time in the Southern League, but neither of these players were available for Saturday, as Lovell had promised to play for the Clarence, and Bob Hawkes had to cry off in the morning. The Town Club were therefore reduced to utilising every professional they had left available, irrespective of the positions to which they were accustomed, and when one looks at the strange composition of their side the result against Groydon must be regarded as among their finest achievements.

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Llanelly were due to visit Luton next Saturday, but the fixture has been rearranged. This is hardly a surprise, because when the Aberdare fixture was in doubt Llanelly were desperately anxious to rearrange the match for a week ago. They have a Welsh cup tie on next Saturday, and the League match at Luton has been fixed for Saturday, Feb. 23th. The Luton players have accordingly been given a week's leave of absence.

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Luton's visit to Newport on Christmas Day was regarded there as one of the most attractive games of the season, and the attendance was easily a record for the Somerton Park enclosure. The Boxing Day match also proved quite an average holiday attraction at Luton, the attendance being about 10,000, and the gate £261.

The Second Division table up to the end of the year is as follows:—

	P.	W.	L.	D.	F	A.	P.
Croydon Common	15	11	0	4	36	6	26
Luton Town	16	12	3	1	48	14	25
Stoke	14	11	2	1	45	15	23
Brentford	12	11	1	0	45	3	22
Pontypridd	16	8	4	4	26	17	20
Swansea Town	12	7	2	3	25	9	17
Llanelly	11	6	4	1	20	8	13
Newport County	14	5	6	3	16	20	13
Barry	14	4	8	2	18	45	10
Caerphilly	15	3	8	4	9	33	10
Mardy	14	2	7	5	13	25	9
Mid-Rhondda	10	2	4	4	11	20	8
Ton Pentre	14	2	9	3	8	34	7
Abertillery	13	2	10	1	11	23	5
Aberdare	10	2	8	0	12	30	4
Treharris	16	1	13	2	10	51	4

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The Blues' Christmas opponents, Newport County, will be at Luton again on the first Wednesday in February for a Southern Alliance game. This is Luton's next match in the Alliance, but Newport have two games in the competition during January. They visit Southend United on the 21st, and entertain Southampton on the 29th. So far they have, like the Blues, lost nine points, but they have played three games less. Croydon Common also have one game during January, being due to entertain Portsmouth on the 21st. The only other Alliance fixture for the month is between Brentford and Southend at Brentford on the 12th, and for this game Mr. Arthur Tearle, of Luton, is the referee. Appended are the positions and records to the end of 1913:—

	P.	W	L.	D.	F.	A.	P.
Croydon Common	12	7	3	2	18	12	16
Luton Town	12	7	4	1	22	18	15
Brighton and Hove A.	8	5	2	1	14	8	11
Newport County	9	4	4	1	11	11	9
Cardiff City... ..	9	3	3	3	14	12	9
Brentford	12	3	7	2	14	24	8
Southampton	10	3	6	1	17	19	7
Portsmouth	9	3	6	0	14	17	6
Southend United	5	2	2	1	4	7	5

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Luton Town's blank date on January 10th, through their dismissal from the F.A. Cup, has been filled by another cup-tie in the Southern Charity Cup competition. This is with Coventry City, who are also out of the principal cup tournament, and the match is to be played at Coventry. As it is a Saturday game it may prove a little more serviceable financially than Southern Charity Cup-ties usually are.