

LUTON'S RECORD IN WALES.

Bateman beaten nine times by his Old Team.

Luton have now made their acquaintance with the whole of the Second Division grounds in South Wales either last season or this, and by unanimous consent the one at Caerphilly is easily the best playing pitch in that district. It is true that the frost had rendered the surface very hard, and, the sun coming out, made the top exceedingly treacherous, but there was plenty of grass, and if it had been possible to have had the ground rolled it would have been an ideal playing area. There is quite a decent grand stand, which, however, was almost deserted on Saturday, most of the spectators preferring to stand out in the open on the opposite side of the field, as the touch line is some distance from the stand on account of the cinder track running parallel with the touch line itself on that side. There is no banking whatever—and, indeed, it does not appear to be necessary. As a matter of fact, behind one goal there is not even a rope to keep the crowd (?) back from too close an attendance on the goalkeeper, and none was required on Saturday either.

The official League time for the kick-off was three o'clock, and as Luton desired to catch an early train back the Caerphilly officials agreed to start at that time, although the match was advertised for 3.15. The spectators were even then very scarce, while at three o'clock there were not twenty people on the ground all told, for the players and referee dress in an adjoining hall, and did not actually reach the field until a few minutes later, with the result that the game was not started until 3.10. There would never be more than 500 present, and how the local club keeps going is a mystery.

The teams were both changed from the previous week. Peplow and Barlow were the new-comers for Caerphilly, and the Secretary stated that the side were the stronger to that extent as compared with the one which made such a poor show at Luton. It will be noticed from the names set out below that Luton had four alterations also, and on the whole those made for strength. It was Mitchell's re-appearance after nearly six weeks, while Rollinson had not been out since Christmas Day at Newport. Jarvie had not been training during the week on account of a troublesome abscess and Robinson took his place, while Hoar made his debut as a professional. The teams were thus constituted as under:—

Luton—Mitchell; Elvey and Robinson; F Hawkes, Frith and R. Hawkes; Durrant, Wileman, Simms, Rollinson, and Hoar.

Caerphilly:—Bateman; Markland and Peplow; Davis, Lean and Evans; Barlow, McCull, Mitchell, Pickett, and Jones.

Referee, Mr. A. E. Farrant, Bristol.

Right from the start Luton were attacking, but as was the case the previous week, they were quite a long time in getting the opening point. Time after time it appeared that a goal must come, but Bateman was in fine form, and the ball somehow appeared invariably to come to him. Naturally it was his anticipation which made his work app or easy, but on the other hand the Luton forwards must bear a part of the blame for their failure to score by their weak finishing when well placed. Durrant on one occasion, getting a pass from Wileman, went clean through, and then working into a splendid position, sent the ball yards over the bar. Fred Hawkes also once appeared to have the easiest of chances after a burst through, but taking the ball within half-a-dozen yards of Bateman he put it straight at his old club mate, who succeeded in getting the ball away amid the cheers of the spectators, who were quite prepared to see a goal netted. Simms did get the ball in the net twice during this period, but the first time he literally punched the ball through, and of course the referee struck the point off. On the next occasion it is doubtful if the referee was right in disallowing the goal, for Simms received the ball in a scrimmage within a few feet of the goal, and as a matter of fact it came off one of the Caerphilly players. As events turned out this goal would have brought a double-figure score, and from that point of view it was a bit unfortunate it was not allowed, for such a record is not obtained very often, and especially away from home, in serious football.

After half-an-hour's play, however, the scoring

commenced in earnest, Rollinson meeting a nice centre from Durrant and neatly placing the ball into the net. Having tasted "blood" it was now only a question of how many, and after a couple of corners had been taken without tangible result Wileman notched goal number two from a centre by Hoar, the ball hitting under the cross bar before finding the net. The third goal was the result of a sharp shot from Durrant, which Bateman got under. The ball, rising sharply from his fist, appeared to be travelling over the line for a corner when Rollinson screwed it back into the goal mouth, and Simms headed it through. Just before the interval Mitchell had his first shot to stop. Jones, managing to slip by the Luton backs and getting well down, had no one but Mitchell to beat. However, the Luton goalkeeper dropped on the ball, and although he was hustled, stuck to it, and eventually cleared the danger, although he was hurt and had to receive some attention from the trainer. The interval score was thus:—

Luton 3, Caerphilly 0

If the Luton players had taken a long time to find the net in the first half, it was a different tale in the second, for Wileman actually added to the score before those who had been attending to the players at the interval could get back to the enclosure. It appears that only Simms, F. Hawkes and Wileman touched the ball from the restart before it was in the net, and within a couple of minutes Simms had burst through again and netted Luton's fifth goal. This was followed by another from a pass by Fred Hawkes, the ball being again put through by Simms. As the second half was only about ten minutes old when the sixth goal came, visions of a record score began to arise, and the spectators became a bit sarcastic at the efforts of the home players. But the fact that Luton were continually in front of Bateman's charge in a measure told against them, for the Caerphilly players settled down to defend only, and were simply out for spoiling tactics, and the goal mouth was so crowded it was difficult to force an opening.

Durrant at last got a pass from the centre when well placed, and with a sharp cross-drive easily beat Bateman, making the total at this stage into seven. There was still quite a long time to go, but the goal scoring took a lull until nineteen minutes remained for play, when Simms headed through from a corner kick. Five minutes later Durrant rushed the situation by an individual effort, and netted a ninth goal. A double-figure score was quite expected by everyone present, but nothing more was done in the last twelve minutes, and so the result stood:—

Luton 9, Caerphilly 0.

It would appear as if Caerphilly depend on Bateman alone to make a decent show in the Southern League, judging from the wretched exhibition of forward play put up the last two Saturdays. It is really difficult to understand how they have notched so many as twelve points, and, by the way, they claim this should have been thirteen at least, for the winning goal allowed to Croydon Common when the ball never reached within a yard of the goal is still a sore point with the Caerphilly officials. This point may still have a very important bearing on promotion.

It was quite an easy afternoon for Luton, and really no test for Hoar, who, however, did all that could be reasonably expected, Rollinson feeding him in his well-known style. Simms got the ball into the net six times, and is to be congratulated upon finding his shooting boots. The Luton right wing did not get along quite nicely for the opening half an hour, but after that period they were complete masters of the situation, and played well together. The Luton halves were not very busy defending, and in consequence were able to act as extra forwards, and this undoubtedly helped the scoring. Elvey and Robinson were quite capable of dealing with the few breakaways, and Frith was not called upon to exhibit his sprinting powers nearly so much as usual. Mitchell had about two difficult situations to face, and came off trumps each time.