

PROMOTION NOT YET WON.

Only One Point from Mid-Rhondda.

What is fondly hoped will prove to be Luton Town's final trip to South Wales so far as Second Division football is concerned was made last week-end. The party of fifteen who left Luton were the same individuals who went to Swansea, and it was hoped this was a good omen for the same satisfactory result, but as will be seen one change was made in the actual eleven who turned out on the heights of Tonypany. Cardiff was made the headquarters as usual, and for a change it was comparatively fine during the week-end, but this did not mean it was certain the match would be played, for the Mid-Rhondda pitch is considered the worst in South Wales this season. The players were met at the entrance to the ground by Archie Annan, the manager, who stated they had tried to make the ground as much like a billiard table as possible, but had not quite succeeded. A climb up the incline soon revealed a truly extraordinary picture. Everything at Tonypany is dreary and black! black! black! Even the colours of the club are of that hue. The pitch itself had been covered with ashes and rolled over, so that on first sight it would appear fairly level, but underneath was a wonderful compound of sticky black clay, and a walk over at the finish of the game gave one a slight idea of the difficulties the players had in attempting to play football on such a pitch. It is a different game altogether on such grounds, and naturally the home players are more used to the conditions. As a matter of fact Stoke are the only visiting team who have won on the Mid-Rhondda ground this season, and they, like Luton last season, played there in September, before the rain came.

Tonypany is probably the only centre outside Cardiff, Swansea and Newport that could support a First Division team, and quite a good crowd assembled. It is difficult to estimate the attendance, as the spectators spread themselves out on the natural terracing the ground possesses, but a rough guess would put the number at between 6,000 and 8,000. Since last season dressing rooms have been put up on the ground, and the terrible struggle to get through the entrance was thereby avoided—to say nothing of the better facilities for removing the evidence of the struggle in the mud at the finish of the match.

The South Wales press on Saturday morning with one consent urged the "Mushrooms" to gather the two points, as it meant two points for Swansea, but probably on Saturday evening this formula would be altered a bit, for as events turned out it would appear that Luton's only serious rivals for promotion will be Brentford, for Swansea would seem to have quite lost their chance. Only a victory at Luton next Saturday would give them the slightest chance, and even that would be a remote one. Luton had on paper form little to fear, if the result at Luton was to be taken into account, but there were circumstances about that match which rather discounted its importance in weighing up the chances, for it will be remembered McCullum was practically a passenger the whole of the game, and the defence adopted the wrong tactics in trying to play the offside game with disastrous results from their point of view. The position of the "Mushrooms" in the League table does not give a proper idea of their ability, for they have almost finished their away fixtures and have mostly home matches now. Therefore they will mount several rungs up the ladder before the end of April unless the large number of games they have still to play renders them stale. As a matter of fact, before the season closes they have sixteen matches to play in various competitions, including the South Wales Cup.

The teams turned out as follows:—

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

Mid-Rhondda:—Ward; Main and Bown, McCullum, Carmichael and Cross; Copestake, Collier, Smith, Love and Evans.

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Luton won the toss and took advantage of quite a strong wind, but the first aggressive movement came from the home team, Evans getting through nicely on the left until he came to Elvey, who coolly tapped the ball round the little winger, and with a fine punt sent the ball up the field. Hoar had a good opening from a centre pass at the opposite end, but his shot was badly directed, and went for a goal kick. Keeping up the pressure, Luton attacked for several minutes, but at the vital moment it was difficult to control the ball, and little use was made of the openings. There was a stoppage of play, however, when Luton were threatening danger. Ward came out to rob Rollinson of the ball, and the goalkeeper was badly injured in the face as he dived for possession. It was quite five minutes before the game was restarted, and it was evident that Ward had received a nasty smack from the blood which stained his white jersey, for, of course, he was not fitted out with the "all black" uniform of the rest of the team. After attention, however, he took up his post again and finished the game.

Within a few minutes Mitchell was punched in the ribs by Smith in one of his rushes, and he had also to receive attention from the trainer, but it was not so serious as the one sustained by Ward, and he soon resumed his position. Simms took a shot, but he was given offside, and therefore it was of no consequent that his aim was a trifle wide. But two minutes later he managed to get the ball into the net with a rather lucky header, Ward being evidently deceived, and allowing the ball to bounce over his hand. On the run of the play the lead was well deserved, but it was a lucky point all the same.

When the game was resumed the "Mushrooms" had a spell of pressure, and Smith shot in hard, but Mitchell was enabled to clear with ease through the ball sticking in the mud. One or two free kicks were awarded to the home side, but they were more the result of stumbles than foul play, and in at least one case against Frith should have been passed over. Just on half-time Hoar got right away and centred the ball, but as had often happened previously, the mud came to the rescue of the defending side, and Ward easily picked up and saved the situation. Interval:

Luton 1, Mid Rhondda 0.

Luton were faced by the wind in the second half, and naturally the play was more often at their end, and nine minutes from the restart the equalising goal came. Evans snapped up a pass from the opposite wing, and with a long drive from quite 20 yards' range sent the ball low and true into the corner of the net amid loud cheers. Rollinson had a nice chance to give his side the lead from a centre by Durrant, but he made a poor attempt, and nothing came of the movement. Hoar and Simms were concerned in a nice effort to force the play, and it appeared likely they would score, but Simms' pass out to Hoar almost in the penalty area was unfortunate as the outside left had run forward and was properly given offside.

Twice during this half Smith got the ball into the net, only to be given offside, and the crowd did not altogether appreciate the referee's decisions, although they were strictly correct. Ward brought off a fine save from a shot by Wileman, but could not hold the ball, and it seemed that his charge would be pierced, for it was promptly returned within a yard or so of the goal, but Simms, who had dashed forward in the first instance, could not get back, and was given offside. When there was only three minutes to go Simms ploughed his way through the mud and was shaping finely when he was badly fouled. The resulting free kick came to nothing, which was rather hard lines for Luton.

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Although it meant the loss of a valuable point, Luton could not complain a deal, for they could not claim any great superiority on the run of the game. It is true they missed one or two chances in a very unlucky manner, but this applied equally to their opponents. Indeed it was impossible to control the ball, and quite useless to attempt to pass the ball along the ground. There was not a deal of work for either goalkeeper, the backs being as safe as could be expected on both sides. Elvey's clean kicking was greatly admired, particularly in the first half. It was not a forwards' game at any stage, only the wingers being able to play their usual game, as the going was a trifle better near the touch line than the centre of the field. Of course it would have been better from a promotion point of view if the two points had been secured, but the points on hand still give Luton the best chance for reaching second place on the table, providing they win all their remaining home matches.

Swansea are certain to prove a big attraction at Luton next Saturday. They were the only team to lower the Blues' colours at home in the Second Division last season, but they are scarcely likely to

repeat that feat this time, because on Saturday even Barry followed Luton's example by beating them at home, the score against the Swans being 2—1. This leaves only the four English clubs in the running, and with them the position is not materially altered. Croydon won 3—0 at Treharris, Brentford followed up a 6—3 victory at Aberdare early in the week by registering 5—0 at home against Abertillery, and Stoke at home beat Newport County 2—0. Of the other teams Mardy came down by 2—0 at Aberdare, so that the present position of affairs is:—

	P.	W.	L.	D.	F.	A.	P.
Croydon Common	25	20	0	5	65	8	45
Luton Town	25	20	3	2	81	19	42
Brentford	24	18	4	2	68	13	38
Stoke... ..	24	17	5	2	62	24	36
Swansea	22	14	5	3	53	17	31
Newport County	25	11	8	6	25	32	28
Pontypridd	25	11	9	5	35	33	27
Mid-Rhondda... ..	23	8	9	6	42	34	22
Barry	24	9	11	4	38	50	22
Llanelly	21	9	10	2	32	30	20
Ton Pentre	25	7	15	3	31	51	17
Abertillery	24	6	15	3	36	41	15
Mardy	25	5	15	5	26	50	15
Caerphilly	25	5	15	5	19	82	15
Aberdare	21	3	16	2	21	60	8
Treharris	27	2	22	3	18	98	7