

LUTON v. MID RHONDDA.

Played at Tonypandy on Saturday. Result:—

Luton	1 goal
Mid-Rhondda	1 goal

The teams were as follow:—

Luton: Mitchell; Elvey and Robinson; F. Hawkes, Frith and R. Hawkes; Durrant, Wilman, Simms, Rollinson and Hear.

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

Referee: Mr. F. Curtis (Bristol).

History was repeated at Mid-Rhondda, inasmuch as the result both this season and last was a draw, and curious to relate, the "Mushrooms" had two goals disallowed for offside in each match. The conditions, however, were altogether different, for while last season the pitch was covered with black coal dust, the state of the playing surface on Saturday last was worse than any ground Luton have ever played a match on. Newport last season was generally considered "the limit," but the Mid-Rhondda enclosure on Saturday was much more difficult from a player's point of view. There was not so much water, but the greater portion of the pitch could only be described as black putty, which in places held the players' legs most effectively. The spectacle on occasions was really amusing to the crowd, for time after time a player would attempt to get off in a dash for possession of the ball, which had landed in one of the soft patches; but by putting a trifle extra pressure on his foot to commence to run he found it was held fast, and he was compelled to watch an opponent, who was even farther off, get to the ball first. In one instance Elvey found himself sinking, and in falling forward his hands and arms were embedded in the mud, and he was held so fast that his comrades had to literally pull him out by sheer force.

During the past week the club officials had been working hard to get the pitch in something

like a playable state, or at any rate that it should appear so for the referee to allow the game to start, for they themselves expressed the opinion as soon as the game commenced the ground would churn up to such an extent that football was practically impossible as known in England. Tons of mud had been scraped off and heaped on the asphaltic track, and in its place ashes had been spread over the ground freely. Scattered over the pitch were ash paths which enabled one to take a walk into the centre with some hope of coming back without mishap, but during the game these proved something of a handicap, for the ball played curious pranks as a consequence. A player could not judge how the ball would come off the pitch, for the bounce off a dry patch would be quite different from that which would be the result of settling in the many swampy portions of the ground. The previous Saturday the referee had pronounced the ground unfit, and a game only took place because the visiting team (Llanelli) had such a large number of postponed games already, with no hopes of Southern League honours, that they begged the referee to allow them to play and get the fixture out of the way.

The Mid-Rhondda officials were very anxious that Mr. Curtis should not come to a similar decision as that of the official of the previous week, for they were naturally expecting a big gate. The overhead conditions for once were really fine, and they had billed Luton as a prospective First Division team. Their Secretary accompanied the referee in his survey of the field, and was delighted when he decided the game should be started. The Luton officials, from previous experience, were not surprised at Mr. Curtis coming to this decision, but it would really be some satisfaction to know what conditions would make a pitch unplayable in the eyes of Mr. Curtis. No reflections, however, are cast upon the ruling, for the Luton players and their officials have every confidence that the game will be conducted with perfect fairness when Mr. Curtis is in charge. He is one of the best referees the Southern League entrust with Second Division matches in Wales. One distinguishing feature of his handling of the game is that he is not overawed by the home crowd, and having come to a decision will not budge to pander to the spectators.

As the kick-off was 4.15 a large crowd was anticipated, and there would be well over 6,000 present, this being, with the exception of Swansea, the biggest attendance Luton have played to in South Wales this season. The Luton team played as selected, although Stevens was taken down as reserve. The state of the ground near the touch line was not quite so bad as nearer the centre, and therefore it was decided to retain Hoar at outside-left. It will be seen that Luton's last year's centre-forward was included in the home side, although he has been out of the team recently. Since Mid-Rhondda visited Luton, Archie Annan has dropped out of the team and they have got a small pair of backs, who however, are very nippy and got through a lot of good work under tremendous difficulties. The "Mushrooms" have got quite a good side, but on Saturday it was only the wing men who could shine, for it was quite impossible to do anything more than kick the ball out of the mud in the centre of the field. This applied as much to the half-back line as the forwards, and McCullum and Cross proved themselves very hard customers to circumvent. "Dai" Evans was the pet of the local crowd, and they were hugely pleased with him when he scored the equalising goal. With the possible exception of allowing Simms' header to beat him, Ward played a fine game in goal, but he was a trifle lucky on at least two occasions, when he lost the ball, not to have a goal put up against him. Early in the game he met with a severe injury to his nose, but he pluckily stuck to his post after prolonged attention from the trainer, and he used a sponge for the remainder of the first half to wipe the blood from his face.

Mitchell made one or two clever saves, but it was not often he was hard pressed. Both Elvey and Robinson defended well, the first-named nipping in with splendid judgment time after time when Evans appeared almost through. As will be judged from the description of the pitch, pretty footwork from either Bob or Fred Hawkes was quite out of the question, but both did quite as well as could be expected, and Frith worked with all his usual energy to hold up any individual forward who made an attempt to break through. It was not a forwards' game at all, for it was quite impossible to combine on a run down the field, and it was most difficult for the inside men to keep up with Durrant or Hoar, who naturally could get along much faster. The centres from the wing were often useless, from the fact that the inside men were unable to get into a scoring position in time, and either the goalkeeper or one of the backs was on the spot.

Luton won the toss and had the advantage of quite a strong breeze to start with. From a centre by Durrant, Rollinson appeared to have a good chance of scoring, but Ward, seeing the danger, dashed out of goal and managed to effectually block the way, although he met with the severe injury mentioned above. Doubtless he felt at the close of the game he was rewarded for his pluck. He appeared to dive for the ball, and either received the force of Rollinson's kick or a blow from the ball itself immediately it left the Luton inside-left's toe, right in the face, and the referee after the match stated he never saw a player lose so much blood from such an accident. It seemed that he would be out of action for the rest of the game, but he did not even leave the field, although there must have been a stoppage of quite five minutes. Within a minute or two Mitchell also received an injury, but happily in this case it was not so serious. Smith, in one of his rushes, went into Mitchell and brought him down rather badly. It was not long before Luton took the lead, Simms being the one to get the ball into the net, although by one consent the local reporters placed this point to the credit of Frith. After the experience of Wileman on arrival at Luton from Swansea, there was much chipping indulged in on the journey back as to the probability of there being a crowd at the station to carry the Luton centre-half shoulder high, particularly as he had not managed to find the net all the season. However, there was no crowd to speak of on arrival, but one individual, who had evidently read the Sunday paper, greeted the players with the re-

mark. "Good old Frith."

Of funny incidents there were plenty, but precious little football. Hoar certainly missed one chance from a right wing centre, when he appeared to have only Ward to beat, although he was some distance out. Still, there is every excuse for mistakes on such a pitch. At half-time Luton were enjoying a goal lead.

Soon after the restart Smith placed the ball by Mitchell with a good shot. The crowd set up a big shout, and for the moment it seemed the equalising point had been scored. The referee, however, soon righted matters, and even while the cheers were still sounding, the ball was kicked off from the six yards line, and very little protest was heard. But it was not long before the spectators had a legitimate opportunity to shout, for nine minutes after crossing over Evans netted a really wonderful goal from quite twenty yards' range, after working the ball into the middle of the field. He must have found a dry spot, for after leaving his foot the ball travelled at a remarkable pace into the far corner of the net. As a matter of fact it was the only occasion during the match the ball went such a long distance so near the surface, and possibly this was one reason it took effect, no one expecting it would reach so far. Following this the "Mushrooms" forced two or three corners, but the Luton defence were equal to all demands, and when the final whistle blew nothing further had been scored. Although on such a ground there were many "rum things," Luton could not grumble at the result so far as actual play went, but there is little doubt on a decent ground they would have secured both points.

FOOTBALL NOTES.

Eight Trains for Stoke.

NO SHILLING GATE.

The Programme of the Rivals.

[By CRUSADER].

The Town did just what was ordinarily expected of them in drawing at Mid Rhonddda. It would have been an unpleasant surprise if they had lost, for with Luton in their present form they were expected to get something out of the visit, and a loss would have made promotion a touchy business. On the other hand it would have been a pleasant surprise if Luton had won, for the combined difficulties presented by the Mid-Rhonddda team, and the Mid-Rhonddda mud are very awkward to surmount. On the whole we ought to be well satisfied with a draw, for after Simms had got a goal, the Mid-Rhonddda team not only equalised but came very near winning. At least we have done as well as Brentford and Croydon did. This one point practically assures Luton promotion if they can win all their home matches, and they will certainly be expected to do so.

Brentford, of course, surprised no one by scoring five goals against Abertillery, for the latter are one of the weakest teams in the Division and they had to visit Griffin Park. Croydon, too, were expected to win at Tre-harris, where the home club are at the bottom of the table and have had nearly 100 goals scored against them. Stoke did not do badly to beat Newport by 2 goals to nil, although the match was played in the Potteries, but Swansea are practically hopeless now for promotion. They were beaten in their match at Barry. The real battle is to be between Luton and Brentford,

and a comparison of the two teams' fixtures is specially interesting at this period. They are:—

Home
Swansea
Stoke
Croydon

Luton.

Away
Stoke
Brentford

Home
Aberdare
Luton

Brentford.

Away
Newport
Caerphilly
Swansea
Croydon

It will be seen that both clubs have to meet some of the most formidable opponents. Of their six games, Brentford have two soft things in Aberdare at home and Caerphilly away. Luton have a stiff proposition in every one of their remaining matches, but fortunately three of the five are at home, and in spite of the fact that the battles will probably be of the most thrilling character, Luton ought to win every one of those three. The two away are very open questions. Many people professed last week to think that the match at Brentford would not be so difficult as that at Mid-Rhonddda. It ought to be worth a lot to see, anyway. Brentford are none too hopeful in having to go to Newport, Swansea and Croydon. No doubt they would much prefer to be in Luton's position as far as the away programme is concerned, but still they can be relied upon to "go all out."

Should Luton make a slip, or even, without making a slip, drop a point at home, the matter will be serious, if Brentford are at the same time putting up a good fight. None of Luton's games can be considered easy, whereas Brentford have got some of a lesser severity. There is also this fact, that one of Brentford's away matches is with Croydon, and though at first sight that may appear a very hard "nut," by the time that match is reached, Croydon, if they go on as at present, will be absolutely sure of promotion, and without any thought of being more favourably disposed to one team than another, they would naturally, and perhaps almost unconsciously, make a less strenuous effort than if, to them, a lot depended upon the match. Someone may say, "Yes, but Luton would also reap the same advantage as Brentford because

their game with Croydon comes later." But Luton's is a home match, and in the calculations of probabilities it has been reckoned that Luton will win the home matches, whereas the away games of both teams have been considered doubtful.

The first of the three great home matches of the season takes place next Saturday, and with weather like that at the beginning of the week, the game with Swansea should draw a big crowd. Last season Swansea gave Luton a big thrashing, but in the last week or so Swansea have shown a dropping off. The strain of having to play so many matches in various competitions may have begun to tell its tale. Last Saturday they were beaten by the odd goal in three at Barry. They may, however, make strenuous efforts to pull up again, so Luton will have to be careful on Saturday. Luton's team will probably be the same that drew at Mid-Rhondda.

The Directors have decided not to have a shilling gate for the Stoke match on Good Friday. The opinions expressed in favour of a shilling gate were more than ever before when such a proposal has been made, but it was thought that the increased charge might annoy some regular patrons, so they will depend on voluntary subscriptions for the bonus and close season fund. It has been suggested that there should be a collection at one of the matches for these objects. Those who favoured a shilling gate, and others who preferred to give support voluntarily, will thus have an opportunity to assist without any suggestion of compulsion. For the Stoke match, therefore, the prices will be as usual, except that at least two bays of the stand will be reserved at 2s. Of course, tickets will be obtainable in advance. The rest of the stand will be 1s. Ladies will be charged full prices.

The excursion to Stoke on Easter Monday will be a great affair. Quite thirty saloons have been booked already, and a large number of compartments. It is expected that 2,000 persons will go, and there will be eight trains. Tickets are being issued all this week, and up to next Tuesday night. Of course, the sooner they are taken the better. It is a whole-day excursion, and the first train will leave about 6 a.m., but full details of the times will be announced next week. The fare is 6s. The Supporters' Committee are charging 1s. 6d. per compartment for booking. Seeing that if there are nine persons in a compartment, the cost works out at 2d. a head, that is a very cheap figure at which to have a seat guaranteed, so that one has not to rush to the station to secure one. The Red Cross Band have decided to go, so there will also be some Luton-made music.

The Supporters' Committee also desire it to be known that as there may be difficulties in the way of getting proper accommodation at Stoke for the person who does not know the place, they are prepared to make arrangements for catering for those who desire it. In this case names should be sent in by next Monday night. The proposed excursion to Brentford has fallen through. The committee wanted a guarantee of 300, and they only had three applications! To those who have heard the statements by many persons that they intended going, this may seem strange, but the fact is that everyone considered that there was no necessity for him to send in his name because he thought everyone else was making sure of the trip being run by sending in his name. As it is a comparatively easy place to reach, the committee, under the circumstances, decided to make no further efforts, but to let those who wished to go make their own arrangements.

As Portsmouth, Southampton, and Brighton are retiring from the Southern Alliance at the end of the season, it may be wondered what Luton's attitude to the competition is. I understand that as the Alliance has been such a financial assistance to them during the last two seasons, Luton feel in honour bound to stick to the Alliance so long as the competition is a good one.