

GILLINGHAM v. LUTON.

Played at Gillingham on Saturday. Result:—

Luton	4 goals.
Gillingham	2 goals.

The players lined up as follows:—

Luton—Mitchell; Elvey and Robinson; F. Hawkes, Johnson and R. Hawkes; Roberts, Wileman, Simms, Rollinson, and Lindley.

Gillingham — Bailey; Mosley and Leslie; Mahon, Lee, and Johnson; Hooper, Pinkney, Glen, Gilligan, and Tatton.

Referee, Mr. C. W. Gillet, Willesden.

Gillingham are one of the teams which Luton have not met during their sojourn in the Second Division, as they were not members of the Southern Alliance. Indeed, since Luton made their last acquaintance with the ground the club has changed its name, and it was the first time "Gillingham" have opposed them, although, of course, New Brompton are quite old rivals.

During the past close season the Gillingham officials commenced quite an elaborate alteration of the ground, including the erection of a fine new stand and up-to-date dressing-rooms. It was hoped to have everything nicely in order for the opening of the season, but the war upset all calculations, and the material necessary for the building was commandeered by the military authorities, and last Saturday was the first occasion the stand had been used, and even now it is in a very incomplete state, while the terracing in front of the stand is not even yet put in hand. When completed the dressing-rooms promise to be quite first class, but on Saturday the glass had not been placed in the windows, so that it was fortunate the day was such a pleasant one, or it would have been rather uncomfortable for the players. The Gillingham club is likely to be hit rather harder than some as many of their supporters are working in the dockyard, and are so busy they are working overtime and cannot get to the matches, while, of course, an even larger number of the usual crowd are away on active service. Still, there were over 4,000 at the match, which, by the way, was the largest attendance of the present season up to date, which points to a serious reduction of income, for in recent years Gillingham have enjoyed quite respectable gates, and even three years ago when Luton visited them, took close on £200.

Since that time both teams have undergone great changes, and not more than half-a-dozen players figured in the game on Saturday that opposed each other on the last occasion of the clubs meeting. Certainly only Fred and Bob Hawkes wore Luton colours. It was Lindley's first appearance in the Southern League, otherwise the team was as at West Ham, the last away game. Although early in the week it was expected that Frith would figure in the side, a preliminary run at Norwich on Thursday gave evidence that he was not yet fully recovered of his injury, and it was decided to give him a few days' further rest before turning out in the Southern League.

It took some little time for the players to settle down, the lively ground, together with a light ball, preventing accurate play. Mitchell was the first goalkeeper called upon as a result of a good bit of work on the part of Tatton, who gave Hooper a nice opening when Robinson failed to judge the centre, but the Luton custodian got into position and dropped on the shot in clever style, and easily cleared the danger. A similar movement at the opposite end of the field was equally as well disposed of, and for a time mid-field play was the order. On the whole, for the opening ten minutes most of the pressure was applied by Gillingham, and

the forwards, backed up by Lee, the home centre-half, several times got into the firing line, but each time the final attempts were badly directed, and Mitchell was not seriously troubled. Hooper possibly had the best chance at this stage, but he weakly placed the ball behind, yards away from the goal.

Luton's first real chance came through a faulty kick by Leslie, the ball travelling to Wileman, who promptly transferred across the field to Lindley, and the latter centred again, but got the ball a trifle too far forward, and the right wing failed to get up in time to turn it through. For a time Luton were handicapped by offside tactics on the part of the home backs. It was soon apparent they were getting the measure of their opponents, and the Luton forward work always appeared the more likely to result in goals. A shot from Rollinson was neatly punched away by Bailey, while Wileman had quite a fair chance from a clever pass by Simms, but he aimed a trifle too high, and the ball went harmlessly over. A temporary raid by the home left wing gave Pinkney a chance, but he fired wildly, and the spectators were inclined to be sarcastic at the poor efforts made to find the net.

However, the superior work of the Luton attack after a quarter of an hour's play brought along the all-important first goal. Roberts brought the ball through in the first instance, and Simms tried one of his well-known drives, but had the mortification to see the ball strike the bottom of the upright with Bailey well beaten, but fortunately Rollinson was on the scene, and coolly tapped the ball along the ground into the opposite corner of the net. It was quite a "Rollinson" goal, and it seemed the easiest thing in the world to score goals, so little effort did it entail. None the more, it was a clever effort, and nicely timed. Lindley had quite a decent chance to score, following a pass from his inside partner, but he failed to gather the ball properly, and the opportunity was lost. But it was not long before Luton were attacking once more, and Roberts dropped a rather awkward ball right from the touch line. Bailey misjudged its flight, and although he appeared to chase as if to block its passage, he failed to hold the ball, and it dropped behind him into the far corner of the net.

Having received a clear two-goal lead, the Luton forwards were making confident attacks, Roberts in particular proving a dangerous man, Leslie being beaten time after time with comparative ease, and once it seemed odds on his adding another goal after the ball had been sent well up the field. He raced clear of all opposition except Bailey, but the latter, realising that all was lost unless he could reach the ball first, dashed out well over the penalty line and just managed to get to the ball one step before Roberts, or it would have been impossible to prevent the Lutonian walking through with the ball had he been so inclined, for there was no other player within yards of the ball. But it was not long before the third goal came along, Wileman having the honour of finding the net on this occasion, snapping up a pass from Roberts and flashing the ball through before Bailey realised the danger.

From this point to the interval the Luton forwards rather slackened down, and quite a number of promising raids were made by the home attack, but they made a sad mess of several fine openings by some wild shooting, and Mitchell was practically unemployed except that he was called upon to take goal kicks twice. No further change came, and the teams retired for half-time with Luton leading by three clear goals.

As in the first half, Tatton forced the play on resumption, but the Luton defence held out, and play was for a time chiefly in the centre. Eventually, Simms broke away, and although fouled was able to get the ball out to Roberts, who had a clear run into goal, but the referee stopped the play and awarded Luton a free kick, which was not wanted under the circumstances, and really handicapped Luton, for the place kick was easily disposed of. Luton were, however, more than holding their own, and the crowd were not at all surprised when Bailey was beaten for the fourth time. Some of the credit of this goal should be given to Simms, for it was his shot which paved the way for Wileman to get his chance. Indeed, Bailey was bowled right over by Simms' drive, and was actually lying on his back when Wileman took aim at what was an open goal.

The points were now pretty safe for Luton, and scarcely anyone present expected Gillingham to score, but the referee came to the rescue, and to the surprise of every other person on the ground stopped play, and without appeal from a single player or spectator, awarded a penalty against Luton. It was only when the player came off the field at the finish that the mystery was cleared up, and then it was discovered that Mr. Gillett considered Wileman had made a foul on Gilligan just inside the fatal area. To show how extraordinary the decision was, it should be recorded that Gilligan himself made no appeal for this supposed offence by Wileman, and as a fact the ball was not near either player at the moment. Wileman himself states that both players were facing opposite directions, and simply touched each other as they turned. Certainly the institution of the penalty kick was never intended to cover such a technical offence as Wileman committed, if he actually broke any rule, which is not at all clear.

Leslie was brought up to take the kick, and he made no mistake with a well-directed ground shot, Mitchell being quite helpless. After this the game resolved itself into kick-about, neither side exerting themselves unduly, but just as the spectators were leaving the field by scores the home side were credited with another unexpected point. There was a bit of a mix up in the goal-mouth, and Mitchell tried to get at the ball after getting it away once, but a crowd of players being just in front of him he did not reach it properly, and Lee, who appeared to knock it down with his hand, easily placed it through from close range. This accident happened four minutes from time, and was the last incident of any note.

Honours, by general consent, went to the better side. Indeed, the two goals netted late in the game rather flattered Gillingham, as their work was far from convincing and certainly did not deserve such good fortune. It will be noticed that neither point was scored by a forward, and honestly they never appeared likely to beat Mitchell, who had quite a quiet time. It was not that the Gillingham forwards did not have any chances, but they were altogether too wild when in front of goal to reap advantage. As a matter of fact, Elvey and Robinson were not at all hard pressed for any lengthened period, which must be taken as a compliment to the Luton half-back line. Without question, it was the most satisfactory feature of the game that the Luton middle line were on their best behaviour and more than held their own, both in defence and attack by helping their forwards, which has not always been the case this season, unfortunately. Rollinson and Wileman both did better than in some games this season; indeed, as the score indicates, there was a decided improvement all round. Roberts was the most dangerous forward, and practically all the goals came from his work in the first instance. Simms was unfortunate with his shooting, but, as indicated, was directly responsible for two of the goals, as his shots were never cleared. Lindley, without being greatly in evidence, improved upon his early season style, and will probably get a further trial.