

FOOTBALL NOTES AND NEWS.

Another Cup-tie Win for Luton.

By a Fluky Goal at Oxford.

Although as the crow flies the distance between Luton and Oxford is little more than forty miles, it is quite an awkward journey, and on Saturday it entailed leaving home by 8.40 a.m., and after two long waits at Leighton and Bletchley, ultimately arriving at Oxford at 11.30. Consequently very few Lutonians accompanied the official party, although three or four extra supporters were noticed just as the game commenced. They had travelled over by motor, while one strong supporter from a neighbouring town travelled over London to the match. It was, perhaps, just as well that so few of the Blues' admirers were present, for, truth to tell, the Luton players did not altogether cover themselves with glory against their amateur opponents. Indeed, it was a common remark round the ropes that it was about the poorest display of football seen on the ground. There were several reasons for this, and one of the chief was the irritation caused by the constant whistling on the part of the referee, who certainly saw quite a lot which was not apparent to those looking on, and they did not all appreciate the number of fouls given against the City players, for undoubtedly the majority of free-kicks were in favour of Luton.

It is quite possible the record even against Yarmouth gave the Luton players a somewhat wrong idea of the capabilities of their amateur opponents, but Oxford City certainly possess a much more effective defence than Great Yarmouth, even if their attacking was very crude. As a matter of fact, Mitchell had only three dangerous looking attempts to cover up during the whole game, while except for about a score of breakaways the ball was the whole ninety minutes inside the City half of the field. Little or no attempt was made to play the open game by the home side, and the game was very monotonous to watch. The Luton forwards seemed quite incapable of securing a clear opening, and Harley was very safe with long shots, and being blessed with a good share of good luck was the hero of the afternoon.

The early kick-off made the attendance appear very scarce at the start, but the crowd finally totalled up to about 2,200, and the actual takings were £57. Of those present quite half were in uniform, and but for their attendance it would have been a disastrous affair from a financial point of view. It may here be stated the military were called upon to pay the full charges of admission, or the receipts would have been considerably less. The names of the players were:—

Luton:—Mitchell; Elvey and Dunn; F. Hawkes, Frith and R. Hawkes; Roberts, Wileman, Simms, Rollinson, and Hear.

Oxford City:—H. Harley; H. Cadwell and F. T. Ansell; G. Hawkin, W. H. Millem and H. P. Slatter; M. B. Robinson, R. Hill, B. F. Packer, A. T. Jakeman, and E. Tobin.

Referee, Mr. W. R. David (Shovenham).

The playing pitch was in very good condition, having been raised on the river side by several feet. There was an abundance of grass, and in places it was rather long. The wind was blowing pretty strongly towards one goal, and Bob Hawkes had the good fortune to win the toss. The opinion was at once expressed that unless Luton got at least three goals in the first half the City had a good chance of winning, so important a factor was the wind considered. Luton naturally were soon threatening the home goal, and quite a succession of corners fell to their lot, but none of them were turned to advantage. The game as a rule went in favour of Luton, but a breakaway by Tobin, who possesses a fine turn of speed, gave Mitchell some momentary anxiety. But the attack soon fizzled out, and the game was again centred round Harley's charge.

What turned out to be the only goal of the match came along quite early in the game, and was a very tame affair. It was one of the few occasions the City defenders really made a "bloomer." Roberts brought the ball along in fine style, and for some reason both the back and the goalie came out to meet the danger from the right wing, and the ball falling to Simms he had an absolutely open goal. The Luton centre was not, however, well placed at the moment for aiming at the goal, and was half backing the goal, but he kicked the ball over his shoulder and it just rolled into the net about a foot inside the far upright. It was somewhat in the nature of a fluke. Still the pressure put on deserved the lead. A minute later another fine movement from Roberts gave Rollinson a chance, and he sent in a grand attempt which appeared a certain scorer, but Harley just saved by giving yet another corner. Time after time it seemed that the City goal must fall, but so well did Harley and his backs defend that the Luton forwards could not find a way to the net. On one occasion Frith actually centred the ball from the left wing near the corner flag, and it was a continual attack on the City goal right up to the interval, when the score was still:—

Luton 1, Oxford City 0.

Although with the wind against them Luton were not able to keep the ball for such sustained periods in the City penalty area after change of ends, the play was still well in the home lines for most of the time. At times the City goal seemed to bear a charmed existence, and the spectators were inclined to jeer at the tantalising manner in which

the ball was passed and repassed across the mouth of goal without actually entering the net. Harley once saved his goal while lying on the ground with his head, and certainly had all the luck when pressed. Mitchell's most dangerous moments came close together, a long shot from Tobin being well got rid of, while a sharp drive from close range by Packer was also cleverly saved. With these exceptions Luton were never in real danger of losing their lead. At the opposite end Simms did manage to get the ball in the net, but was given offside after taking a pass from Frith, who at one time appeared likely to go through on his own.

In the final quarter of an hour Bob Hawkes made several gallant attempts to increase the lead and make matters safe, one shot in particular being a fine one indeed, but Harley just managed to reach the ball in the far corner of the net. The final incident of note was a free kick for hands against Dunn just before time, and from a financial point of view it might possibly have been an advantage to Luton if the City had equalised from this. There would not have been time to have restarted the game, and it would have brought a gate at home on Wednesday. The money would have been very handy just now, for the loss caused by the bad weather when Millwall visited Luton has placed the Club's finances in a desperate state, with no home match this month except Christmas Day. However, the one goal scored makes certain of another game on December 19th, and if the luck of the draw gives the match at home it may prove less of a strain than anticipated to weather this month.

It should be mentioned in fairness to the Luton forwards that Wileman broke down early in the game, although he played right through, but even allowing for this their work was much below their usual form, and certainly did not impress the Oxford spectators. Undoubtedly Bob Hawkes was the favourite Lutonian, and the critics were quite unanimous in giving him as the finest player on the field, as indeed he was. Elvey and Dunn both played well, although the latter was too much inclined to place his opponents offside, a policy which entails certain risks, and particularly away from home. The referee does not always agree with the full back's notions, and once or twice on Saturday the situation was endangered from this cause. Now it is all over the one goal is quite as good as a dozen, but on paper it was not at all a great performance, and it is just possible a break-away midway in the second half which might have led up to a goal would have given the home players sufficient encouragement to have gone in and won.