

FOOTBALL NOTES.

Southern League.

LUTON v. CARDIFF CITY.

Result:—

Luton 2 goals

Cardiff 1 goal

The goal which Bob Hawkes scored from his emergency position of outside left for Luton on Saturday in the last minutes of the game against Cardiff City had interesting results, especially for Luton. It gave Luton the two points, which in their turn enabled them to rise from fifteenth to fourteenth position on the table, and it deprived Cardiff of a point which would have kept that team on the fourth rung, though Watford, who now occupy it, are certainly more entitled to it, as Cardiff City have played two more matches.

The weather in the forenoon was all against a large attendance, and the rain and the snow had made havoc with the ground. True, the sun shone just before the kick-off, but it had only smiled to deceive, and when the teams came out rain was falling copiously. Still, there was not a bad gate in a numerical respect, and it is computed that at least 5,000 spectators watched the game.

The teams were not exactly at full strength. The Luton middle division was rearranged, and it was necessary to transfer Bob Hawkes,

the skipper, from left half to outside left in the front line. The whole rearrangement as it worked out on the play disarms the slightest criticism, and Hawkes in particular showed the talent for combination and correct centring that few regular halves could equal. The Cardiff club brought Devlin in at inside right at the last minute, and put Goddard to the wing position. In this case, also, the rearrangement could not be complained of, Devlin and Goddard proving a happy partnership. The teams were as follow:—

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

Cardiff.—Stephenson; Doncaster and Layton; Harvey, Keenor and Hardy; Goddard, Devlin, G. West, Barnett and Evans.

Mr. F. W. Barton, of Ealing, was the referee, and excepting that a few of his decisions on the offside rule were not popular with the home spectators, he had excellent command of the game, and gave general satisfaction.

Cardiff opened strongly, and in the first five minutes had nearly all the play. Their forwards showed a "nippiness" that sorely extended the Luton defence, and no one would have been very surprised had the visitors taken the lead at this point. Goddard once struck the bar with great force, and shortly afterwards West was at hand close in to receive a pretty centre from Evans, and he made no mistake with a shot which went into the corner of the net, with Mitchell well beaten.

This reverse seemed to refresh Luton, and for the remainder of this half they were all over Cardiff. Stephenson was beaten right up to the last moment by a tricky screw shot from Wileman, which he just managed to scoop out at the foot of an upright, and the next second he had the utmost difficulty in diverting a high drive from Simms into a corner kick. Cardiff could only relieve the pressure once or twice, but almost on the interval Goddard raised the hopes of the City supporters—quite a number seemed to be on the ground—by describing a semi-circle round the Luton defence and causing Mitchell some anxiety. However, the Luton goalkeeper was all there again, and so the interval arrived with the visitors up by the only goal. How the players controlled the ball at all after the first twenty minutes was surprising, as occasional sharp showers had turned the turf into a quagmire, and it was a common thing to see the harder-worked of the players sliding as many as five and six yards. Some were almost unrecognisable from mud at the interval.

A "wash and brush up," and in several cases a change of knickers and jerseys, worked wonders in the appearance of the men, and they stepped on to the enclosure as jauntily as though it was the opening "45." Before they got into their swing, however, a serious misfortune befel Cardiff. As Devlin burst through and shot he collided with Robinson and fell. Play was stopped and the forward assisted to the rails. It was difficult to see exactly what happened, but as Robinson's long legs were prominent in the mix-up, and Devlin was stanching the blood on his face with a handkerchief, it was surmised that he had received a kick.

He left the ground, and thenceforward the visitors had only four forwards. The absence of the stocky little fellow made a good deal of difference to the Cardiff attack. I spoke to him after the match and ascertained exactly how the accident occurred. Devlin exonerated Robinson from all blame, and said that it was not a kick, but that their heads met, and his eyebrow was so severely gashed that he had to receive medical attention, three stitches being put in the wound. Devlin accepted the accident as one of the fortunes or misfortunes of war, and appeared to be far more concerned over the penalty kick which gave Luton the equaliser than over his accident.

In this matter, however, he evidently relied on the version of his colleagues, for the incident from which Luton's equaliser came occurred ten minutes after Devlin's departure. The "Citizens" strongly argued that neither Doncaster nor Keenor touched Simms or Rollinson when they went for the Cardiff goalie, but Mr. Barton was right on the spot, and his decision was very prompt. Stephenson had accomplished some marvellous saves, but it would have required three men of his ability to have arrested Robinson's successful ground shot, which travelled at such a speed that it made quite a tour of the net.

After this Luton had the better of the exchanges, and the manner in which they maintained the punishing pace proved that their military training is not detrimental to their stamina. With the Cardiff halves and backs fighting for all they were worth to share the spoils the contest waxed fast and furious, and it was really exhilarating to see how keenly the players contested advance or retreat. During a very strenuous period the work of the Cardiff defence was magnificent, and their excellent position in the League could well be understood. There was a fervour and a fearlessness about their game, but this picturesque display was due in a very large measure to the vim and virility of the Luton attack. It was generally conceded that the Luton forwards gave one of their most determined displays, and here let it be said that Bob Hawkes was quite as good as any man in the line.

The home captain's work was of a quiet, calculating character, and if he lacked speed, that deficiency was counterbalanced by the usefulness of his work. The occasions on which he failed to utilise his opportunities were very few, and over and over again he sent Rollinson or Simms away with dainty passes. And with the mercurial Roberts dashing away whenever he got the chance, no wonder the Cardiff defenders were on tenterhooks.

Naturally, the Cardiff forwards were disorganised by the absence of Devlin. Better balanced before the interval, the defection of Devlin took a considerable burden off the shoulders of the Luton defence, and consequently enabled the forwards to receive more attention than had previously been the case. There were one or two exciting moments in the vicinity of the home goal, when the presence of the Cardiff inside right might have meant all the difference to the result, but, as a rule, all the thrills were conceived in Cardiff territory, and they became more pronounced as time wore on.

What a climax it was! The home forwards, instead of being depressed and disheartened by the continual defeat of their efforts, worked harder than ever, and it was just that grim and earnest determination that snatched victory at the last minute. Roberts showed Layton a clean pair of heels and centred. Simms would have scored had his luck been in, for his shot struck the crossbar and rebounded. Then Rollinson sent in, but Stephenson managed to get in the way of the ball and it rebounded from his legs. It came to Bob Hawkes, and here the coolness of the veteran manifested itself. Any one of the remaining forwards would probably have crashed the ball against the onrushing Doncaster. Not so, Robert. He neatly and coolly sidestepped the big back, and then carefully lifted the ball into the farther corner of the net. It was a craftsman's goal, and a fitting climax to the dogged determination of the Luton forwards.

One felt rather sorry for the Cardiff defence, particularly Stephenson, but it was a well and hard-earned goal.

On the Cardiff side Stephenson was entitled to chief recognition. He had some luck, but he merited it. Many of his saves stamped him as a really first-class custodian, and he was never at fault. His backs compared favourably with the home pair. They were heavier and their volleying superior. Harvey and Keenor were good at half, and Evans and West were the pick forward.

On the home side Bob Hawkes' work has been referred to, but all worked very well indeed, and after Saturday's climax they have no excuse for throwing up the sponge when the odds are against them. Heath has much

to learn at half, but he displayed pluck and promise, while Frith and Fred Hawkes worked untiringly. Elvey was cool and resourceful and Robinson fully justified his inclusion. Mitchell had no chance with the goal registered against him, and he was on his very best behaviour. Considering the state of the ground it was a rare match and worthy of thrice the attendance attracted.

The Southern League table to date is as follows:—

	Goals						
	P.	W.	L.	D.	For	Agst.	Pts.
West Ham United	25	13	6	6	42	33	32
Reading	25	13	7	6	46	34	32
Watford	24	12	5	7	36	25	31
Cardiff City	26	14	10	2	49	25	30
Southampton ..	25	13	9	3	49	47	29
Brighton & Hove	23	12	7	4	32	26	28
Portsmouth	26	11	9	6	39	33	28
Millwall	22	11	6	5	30	22	27
Northampton ..	24	9	7	8	33	33	26
Swindon	25	9	8	8	49	42	26
Exeter City	25	10	9	6	38	29	26
Queen's Park R.	24	7	7	10	35	37	24
Crystal Palace ..	24	8	9	7	30	34	23
LUTON	24	8	10	6	39	47	22
Norwich City ..	25	6	8	10	34	39	22
Plymouth A.	24	5	9	10	35	39	20
Southend U.	24	7	11	6	27	34	20
Bristol Rovers ..	23	7	14	2	37	42	16
Croydon	25	5	14	6	30	46	16
Gillingham	26	5	17	6	28	61	12