

FOOTBALL NOTES.

LUTON v. SWINDON.

Played at Swindon on Saturday. Result:—

Luton		2 goals
Swindon		2 goals

The teams turned out as under:—

Luton.—Mitchell; Elvey and Robinson; F. Hawkes, Frith and B. Hawkes; Roberts, Bos, Simms, Hollinson and Hoar.

Swindon.—Skiller; Kay and Milton; Tent, Sile and Handley; Jefferson, Fleming, Wheatcroft, Bown and Bolland.

Referee, Mr. L. Bullmer, Northampton.

Although there does not appear any immediate danger of Luton falling into one of the "two bottom places," the point obtained at Swindon was nevertheless very welcome after the three successive failures at home. Still Luton's remarkable away form in contrast to the poor results at home would have prepared their supporters for some such result. With the exception of Norwich, no Southern League game has been lost away from home since November 14th, at Southend, a truly fine record of four months' work. Swindon this season have fallen away from their best form, but only two matches have been lost at home, and points are always difficult to get on the Wiltshire ground. To make the performance the more creditable Luton were short of Dunn and Wileman from the recognized team, while Swindon's lot bore a very familiar appearance, and was practically the same combination that won the Championship last season.

Gates at Swindon have suffered severely through prevailing conditions, and it was announced the takings on Saturday only realised £67, while a month ago they actually played on a Saturday to a £23 gate. It is true the day was unfavourable, but even then it would be about the smallest of the day for a Southern League game. One reason, of course, of the small gates at Swindon is that they have practically no troops stationed in the town itself, and quite a large proportion of their regular followers are in France or actively preparing to go there. The weather on Saturday was almost summerlike in character, and by far the brightest of the season for spectators; a bit too bright for the players, particularly in the early stages, when Luton were facing a dazzling sun.

The game itself was pleasantly contested, and the result, on the whole, was quite fitting, although there was just a shade of disappointment among the Luton players, that after holding the lead up to five minutes from time a rather lucky shot should bring about the loss of a point. Just at first it appeared Luton were in for a severe drubbing, for it took a long time for their defence to settle down, the sun, as before remarked, being the main cause for this. But afterwards, up to the interval, Luton certainly played the more convincing football, and there were very flattering remarks made at the interval on the clever way in which the two goals were scored. Without question, the two goals netted by Luton were the result of some beautiful midfield work, and were altogether more deserving than the couple scored by their opponents from this point of view.

Fleming opened the scoring ten minutes from the start in an unexpected fashion, the ball coming to him while almost surrounded by the Luton defenders, and it seemed impossible for the Swindon players to get a clear shot at goal. Indeed, it was a result of this apparent impossibility that actually gave him the point, for he did not properly kick the ball, but it cannoned off one of the Luton players and just rolled into the net. Mitchell would almost certainly have got to it if a direct shot had been made, but it was deflected just sufficiently by its contact with Frith's leg leg practically at the same moment that Fleming touched it that it went right away from the Luton custodian. A few minutes later Wheatcroft made an awful miss from one of Bolland's centres, putting the ball over the goal line when he appeared to have the goal at his mercy, Robinson having apparently left the ball to Mitchell, while the goalie evidently expected his comrade to tackle the home centre. This was probably the turning point of the game, for

a second goal to Swindon just here would have been too great a handicap to have recovered.

But, on the whole, at this stage Luton were showing the more aggressive tactics, and Hoar almost brought about an equalising goal as a result of a fine run nearly from the centre line, all the Luton forwards, with the exception of Roberts, taking part in the finishing movement, which ended by Skiller making a clever save. But so well were the Luton forwards playing that it was no surprise when Rollinson, with a clever header, beat Skiller half an hour from the start. The Luton inside left got the ball from Roberts, who tricked Milton easily, and planted the ball perfectly for Robinson to score. Five minutes later another clever bit of work on the part of Roberts led up to the ball being placed nicely in the goal mouth, Simms and Rollinson both being well placed, but each just failed to gather as it passed across the field. Hoar, however, dashed in, and meeting the ball drove it right across into the far corner with an unstoppable shot. Nothing further happened up to half-time, and Luton then crossed over with a well-deserved lead.

In the second half Luton were greatly handicapped by the fact that Rollinson was unable to get about on account of a badly strained thigh, and acted practically as a fourth half-back. Naturally this upset the combination among the forwards, and made Swindon appear to be having a greater share of the game. Still the Luton defenders stuck to their work in fine style, and Mitchell was well protected all through. Once Simms almost made victory

certain with a hard drive which laid Skiller out, but although there was just a suspicion the Swindon goalkeeper had been driven over the line, the referee gave the home side the benefit of the doubt. He also did the same in favour of Luton when a strong appeal was made by the spectators for a penalty kick against Elvey just afterwards. So far as the players were concerned there was no decided appeal, but the crowd, naturally anxious for a goal, as time was slipping away, made quite a demonstration, and eventually he stopped the game, and pointed out one particularly noisy individual to the home officials and police.

The equalising goal came five minutes before the finish. Wheatcroft, who had made one or two rather poor attempts during the game, made amends with a shot which hit the upright and rebounded across the goal to the opposite side almost at right angles, but just sufficiently inside to cross the line. There was one other exciting incident when Fleming made a big effort to get the lead, but Mitchell knocked his final attempt down and the whistle went immediately afterwards.

After the opening quarter of an hour there was no pronounced weakness in the Luton side, although, as explained, the attack in the second half suffered through Rollinson's lameness. Mitchell was never overworked, while Elvey and Robinson, on the whole, played a sound game. Probably the greatest improvement on recent displays was at half-back, and as a line they held the Swindon vanguard in good style. The friendly duels between Bob Hawkes and Fleming were carried out with the best of feeling, and the Swindon artist did not always get the better of the tussle by many chalks. Frith also put in a lot of effective work, while Fred Hawkes kept his wing under control in fine fashion. When at full strength the Luton forwards gave a splendid exhibition of aggressive football, and certainly caused the home defence plenty of running about. Roberts' centres were always dangerous, and he was helped very effectively by Roe in his quiet way. Simms, although not scoring, opened out the game well, and gave his opponents something to think about all the time. Hoar, if not quite so effective in getting through as Roberts, played a clever game, while his goal was a brilliant effort. Rollinson did well in the first half, and helped the defence in good style afterwards when unable to take his place right in the front.

Swindon are still a good side, but they did not put that enthusiasm into their work that one would expect. Their two wingers were not the equal of Roberts and Hoar on Saturday, while Fleming only occasionally gave evidence of his known cleverness. Wheatcroft is getting slow, and probably the effectiveness of the Swindon attack suffers most from this cause. Tout was the most prominent of the half-backs, although Silto played a hard game. Kay and Milton were very hard pressed by the sharp movements put in by the Luton attack, and the latter could not quite hold Roberts at times.