

FOOTBALL NOTES AND NEWS.

Luton cause another surprise at Swindon.

The bewildering inconsistency of Luton's Southern League team is enough to exasperate a saint. West Ham on Wednesday became the second team to take the full four points from the Blues this season, Luton sustaining their third successive defeat at home within a period of twelve days. Mitchell returned to the team to take charge of the goal, but Bob Hawkes was still on the absent list, and other absentees were Elvey and Hoar, Robinson partnering Dunn at back, while Johnson, on the strength of his display with the Reserves the previous Saturday, was given a run at his old original position at outside left. It could hardly be said that Joe showed himself the winger he once was, but still he had a big hand in the only goal Luton scored. He worked close in before giving Simms a pass that was quite a model of accuracy and good judgment, and the centre converted it into a really fine goal. Luton's forward work, however, once more left a deal to be desired from the point of view of combined effectiveness near goal, and failure to utilise opportunities enabled West Ham to capture the points by means of two goals registered in the first half. Bailey, who deputised for Hildon at inside left, had a hand in both points. Leafe registered the first from a centre from Bailey which passed across the goal close to the ground, and Bailey himself netted the other.

After their recent disastrous form at home Luton's chances of gaining any honour at Swindon on Saturday appeared very remote, but once again the team surprised both friend and foe by putting up a really fine show away from home. It is a remarkable fact that Luton have so far actually scored more goals away from home than on their own ground in Southern League matches this season, and Bob Hawkes can certainly look upon himself as something of a mascot, for his reappearance brought a welcome change in the luck, seeing he has not played since the victory at Exeter. Dunn, of course, was an absentee as a result of the incident at Exeter, and will also miss the Brighton match on Wednesday, as his suspension for seven days dates from Friday last. But Robinson, in the opinion of many, is quite the equal of the absent player, and therefore the fact he was playing did not weaken their position to any appreciable extent on paper. At the last minute Wileman reported himself unfit, and Roe was given further opportunity to gain experience in the best company, while it will be noticed that Hoar returned to the side after a very brief absence.

The Swindon team presented a very familiar appearance, the side, with the exception of Milton, having opposed Luton on many occasions in former years. From the spectators' point of view the day was an ideal one, but the fact that at least 5,000 men employed at the railway works have joined the colours has seriously affected the Swindon gates. The khaki element, which is such a feature on most grounds this season, was not so pronounced as usual at Swindon, but for this there was a reason. It appears the military authorities have placed Swindon itself out of bounds, although there are several thousand soldiers in camp about a couple of miles out of the town. A fortnight since a number who came into the town created some disturbance, and the result hits the Swindon club a bit hard, for they had about three thousand soldiers at their last match, while on Saturday they could would not number more than three hundred.

The teams were constituted as follows:—

Luton:—Mitchell; Elvey and Robinson; Fred Hawkes, Frith and R. Hawkes; Roberts, Roe, Simms, Rollinson and Hoar.

Swindon:—Skilker; Kay and Milton; Tout, Silto and Handley; Jefferson, Fleming, Wheatcroft, Bown and Bolland.

Referee, Mr. L. Bullmer, Northampton.

Bob Hawkes lost the toss, and Luton were compelled to face a dazzling sun, which proved a severe handicap to the defensive brigade on more than one occasion, and was the cause of several awkward situations arising. Luckily, with the exception of the opening goal, none of these were turned to account. Still for the first twenty minutes Luton appeared to be in for a bad time, and all the attacking was done by Swindon. The goal netted by Fleming about ten minutes after the start was quite a soft affair, and even took the crowd by surprise, for there were no less than three Lutonians who appeared to have quite as good a chance to get the ball as the Swindon captain. Apparently the ball hit Frith's leg at the same moment as Fleming kicked it, and this probably gave Swindon the goal, for it put a screw on the ball which caused it to swerve away from Mitchell, who was standing prepared for a shot, and it slowly entered the far corner of the net quite out of the reach of the Luton goalkeeper. For some time after this the game went all in favour of the home side, but the Luton forwards midway in the half began to assert themselves, and Roberts was giving Milton quite as much work as he wanted. The Luton winger at last got across a fine centre, which Rol-

linson met with his head and turned the ball right away from Skiller into the net. It was a very clean goal, and acknowledged as such by the spectators.

Having discovered the Swindon defence was beatable, the Luton forwards kept up the pressure, and another fine centre from Roberts, led up to a second goal. The ball dropped nicely in front of goal, and with Simms and Rollinson well up each appeared to have a chance to get a shot in, but just failed to gather the ball, and Hoar, dashing in from the wing, drove it all along the ground into the far corner of the net in great style, and thus put Luton ahead. Undoubtedly it was a shock to the spectators, but again the goal was well worked for, and fully deserved. From this point to the interval Luton were full value for their lead, and several times appeared likely to increase their advantage, but the home defenders were not caught napping, and the teams retired for the interval with the score—

Luton 2, Swindon 1.

Luton's chances of increasing the lead were seriously handicapped by the fact that Rollinson, who strained his leg against West Ham, was feeling the effect of his second hard game within three days, and was compelled to act mainly on the defensive during the second half. As a consequence Swindon were attacking for the greater portion of the concluding half of the game. Still there were occasions when Luton were a trifle unlucky, particularly when Simms fired in a shot from short range, which completely doubled Skiller up and almost knocked him through, but he just managed to keep the ball in front, and the referee would not allow the claim that the ball had passed over the line while held by Skiller. The game was stopped for a minute or so to enable Skiller to recover by the attention of the trainer.

But more chance, fell to Swindon, and Wheatcroft got into the bad books of the home supporters by missing badly on one occasion. Fleming was trying to retrieve the situation by individual efforts, and called for all the energies of the Luton defenders to keep him at bay.

A strong appeal for a penalty against Elvey was set up by the spectators, but Mr. Bullmer would not have it, and for a minute or so it appeared likely there would be a regular "rumpus." Spotting one particularly noisy individual the referee stopped the game and called the police to the spot to deal with him in case he continued his behaviour. There was a little hooting after this, but eventually this died down, and the game continued to be contested in quite a good spirit by the players, who refused to be influenced by the noisy element round the ropes.

As time approached with the lead still in possession of Luton their defence played with every confidence, and it was rather in the nature of a surprise when Wheatcroft equalised with a long shot which seemed to be travelling wide, but hit the far post and rebounded right across the goal about a yard inside the opposite post. This success roused the Swindon players to redouble their efforts, and just on time Mitchell earned the thanks of his comrades by keeping out an awkward looking customer from Fleming, who brought the ball along the goal line instead of centring in the customary style from this position. Still the Luton players considered they had come out of a hard tussle with distinct credit. Result:—

Luton 2, Swindon 2.

Undoubtedly the good show put up by Luton was a big surprise to the Swindon crowd, who, judging by certain recent performances, considered Luton would prove an easy prey. In the first half the Luton forwards played a really fine open game, and fully deserved their two goals. Roberts when he got away was always dangerous, and Roe played a quiet effective game, appearing more at home than he was against West Ham. Simms was a trifle unfortunate not to increase his goal record, while Robinson, until he fell lame, constituted a clever wing with his old partner. Bob Hawkes' return to the middle division apparently rendered this line more effective, for as a trio they were streets in front of some recent shows. Elvey and Robinson after the opening twenty-five minutes proved a safe pair of backs, and Mitchell was not a great deal employed as a consequence.

Curiously enough, Saturday's result was the same as when Swindon visited Luton. The Blues have now 25 points for 29 matches, and they cannot afford any more set-backs such as they have recently experienced.