

FOOTBALL NOTES.

QUEEN'S PARK RANGERS v. LUTON.

Played at Kensal Rise on Saturday. Result:—

Luton 3 goals

Queen's Park Rangers nil

The teams were as follow:—

Luton.—Mitchell; Elvey and Dunn; F. Hawkes, Frith and R. Hawkes; Roberts, Roe, Simms, Rollinson and Hoar.

Queen's Park Rangers.—McLeod; Millington and Pullen; Broster, Wilde and Whyman; Thompson, Birch, Miller, Gregory and Donald.

Referee, Mr. A. E. Caseley (Wolverhampton).

Being compelled to vacate Park Royal, as the line which served that rather outlandish but finely equipped ground was taken over entirely by the War Office, the Rangers fell back upon their original home at Kensal Rise. In the old days the pitch was considered quite a decent one, but modern conditions have altered very materially, and it seemed almost like a return to the days of amateur football, for turnstiles and the usual surroundings of a League ground were missing. It is eleven seasons since the Rangers played their Southern League matches on the spot, and apparently the whole affair has been allowed to go to ruin. Anyway, the stand, which is quite a distance from the playing area, is in a bad state of repair, and gives one a depressing feeling right away. On the Luton side, only Bob and Fred Hawkes had ever played there before, while, of course, none of the present Rangers team was playing for the club in the old days at Kensal Rise. The gate on Saturday was a trifle under £80, but this was partly accounted for by a heavy snowstorm which came on about twenty minutes before the kick-off.

The cancelling of all excursions prevented the support of a number of Londoners who usually accompany the team to London grounds, but this was in a measure made up by a strong contingent of khaki-clad Bedfordshire lads stationed at the White City, who planted themselves on the disused cycle track. They shouted encouragement to the visiting players, using the Christian names of the local players in the Luton team pretty freely, and this certainly made matters a bit homelike.

Luton had out their strongest side—at least there were no players standing down through injury, while in the opinion of their officials the Rangers were only short of Mitchell at centre-half. The pitch itself, to the onlookers from the ropes, appeared to be in excellent condition, but when the game commenced it was evident it was not altogether a billiard table, notwithstanding that it had been recently rolled. The neglect of years cannot be put right in a week or two.

Bob Hawkes lost the toss, and as there was a strong breeze about, naturally, the Rangers took advantage of it. But to the delight of the Bedford boys on the track Luton went off with a burst, and for the opening quarter of an hour practically monopolised the play. Bob Hawkes, who unlike the rest of the side, had been resting all the week, was observed to be in great form and kept his forwards well fed with the ball. As a consequence, Hoar in particular had some glorious passes, and he had quite an afternoon out at the expense of Millington. After a series of attacks of this nature the home goal fell to an easy opening taken by Simms. The ball had originally come over from Luton's left wing, and Roe, who seemed to have a chance, did not make full use of it. Still he caused McLeod to leave his charge in an endeavour to clear the danger, and when the ball was put into the centre Simms had little more to do than touch it through. With the least bit of luck hereabouts Luton would have been at least three goals up, for McLeod was kept constantly on the alert, and it was really more by good fortune than clever play he was not beaten several times. But the constant facing a strong wind eventually had its effect, and the ball was often in the Luton quarters, for it was quite easy to send the ball well into the other half in making a clearance, and, naturally, with two clever wingers like Thompson and Donald, the Luton defenders were called upon to meet a number of break-aways.

Still, unless one of the players named brought the ball towards the Luton goal there was little danger, for the three inside forwards made anything but good use of their opportunities, and even when they got a centre from the wing they failed badly. It seemed an easy matter for Elvey and Dunn to hold up the inside trio, and they could allow the wingers a decent amount of rope, but by concentrating on the centre they were able to nullify all the energy put in by Thompson and Donald. Nevertheless there were occasions when Miller and Co. had a decent chance to have a pop at Mitchell, but they shaped so poorly that the Luton goalkeeper had very little chance to shine.

Of course, the Luton half-back line must take a share of the credit for this ineffectiveness on the part of the Rangers' attack, and really, as a line, they have not done better work in any match this season. Considering the strong wind which assisted the Rangers, undoubtedly the grand work put in by the Luton halves and backs in the first half was the main cause of the ultimate triumph, for although only a single goal was netted up to the interval it was really a winning advantage under the conditions.

It is true that in the second half the breeze slackened somewhat, and for a short time the Rangers held their own, but again their shooting lacked sting, and the Luton goal was seldom in real danger. On the other hand, one or other of the Luton forwards was continually threatening McLeod, and that worthy was palpably uncomfortable. Roberts possibly had the easiest chance after working into the centre with the ball, but he failed to find the target, although he put plenty of sting into his shot. Again, Simms came through the centre on one occasion in great style, but "blinded" the ball yards over from long range. As in the first half, Hoar, finding he could round Millington very easily, was putting in some capital centres, and when Simms rushed one of these through about twenty minutes from time, any possible hope the Rangers had of saving the game was effectually squashed.

A few minutes later still another centre from Luton's left wing led up to Simms doing the "hat trick," although McLeod was somewhat at fault this time, for, in attempting to clear the first attack, he seemed to simply push the ball out to Simms, who promptly flashed it through before the Rangers' goalkeeper had a chance to recover himself. Just before the finish the Luton goal suffered its narrowest escape, for a sudden breakaway on the part of the Rangers left wing brought about the finest shot of the afternoon, the ball hitting the upright with terrific force and glancing out for a goal kick. But as this was less than four minutes from the end it would scarcely have affected the result, so far as points were concerned. Still it looks much better on paper to win by three clear goals.

This was only the third time Luton have managed to maintain a clean sheet in their Southern League matches this season, and, curiously, on each occasion it has been an away fixture. The whole of the Luton team, with the exception of Mitchell, can take credit for a really fine performance, and in the case of the goalkeeper, so well did his comrades in front perform that he was practically an unemployed person. It was acknowledged by the Rangers' officials that the Luton forwards quite deserved their three goals, and if the score had been doubled there would have been no cause for complaint. The home forwards were given quite equal chances, but they gave a most inept display when they got anywhere near the Luton goal, and the local spectators were pretty free in their comments as they left the ground. It was a complete turn of the tables from the previous Saturday, when the Luton crowd were similarly placed after the Southend fiasco.