

FOOTBALL NOTES.

BRISTOL ROVERS v. LUTON.

Played at Bristol on Saturday. Result:—

Bristol Rovers 1 goal.

Luton nil.

The teams were as follow:—

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

Bristol Rovers — Stansfield; Harvie and Taylor; Hardman, Walker, and F. Mason; Crompton, Roe, Davison, Brogan, and W. Hurley.

Referee, Mr. W. E. Russell (Swindon).

Luton were not quite at full strength, for Roe did not feel quite sure of his leg standing the strain of a match. Thus Wileman retained the inside right position, while the bereavement sustained by R. Hawkes by the death of his father naturally prevented his taking the journey. Although it was known Mr. Hawkes, sen., was scarcely likely to be able to get out again, his death came rather unexpectedly at the finish, and it was scarcely more than an hour before the team were due to leave that the club officials were aware of the decease, but no time was lost in filling the captain's place, Wilson at once being advised.

Bristol Rovers badly needed the two points on Saturday, and as Luton were quite safe from any fear of relegation, it will be understood the home team had more at stake than Luton. Included in their ranks were a couple of amateurs in F. Mason and W. Hurley. Although the latter figured pretty regularly in the team a season or so ago, he had dropped out of first-class football until the holiday matches, when an emergency had brought him in again, and so well did he perform that he retained his position for the Luton match.

Probably the anxiety of the Rovers' players to win spoiled the game from a pure football point of view. There was plenty of keenness, but the finer points of the game were sadly lacking. Naturally the result pleased the local crowd, who were in a bit of a funk on account of Luton's wonderful away record. It must be confessed, apart from the grave issue which hung on the result to the home club, there was little to excite anyone during the match. It was a long series of big kicks from start to finish, with the Rovers having the better of what attacking there was up to the interval, and the other way round after changing over. The feature of the opening stages was the fine work put in by Hurley, but he was badly supported, and all his energies were thrown away when he parted with the ball, for not one of his comrades seemed able to apply the finishing touch.

When the Luton forwards got away they showed both pluck and speed, but nevertheless Stansfield had practically nothing to do, for although they shot straight for goal it was at too high an elevation, and particularly was this the case with Simms, who twice in the first half-hour broke through in very promising fashion. It was not long before the interval that what proved to be the only goal of the match was netted, and it was a very lucky point indeed.

There was a bit of a mix-up near the Luton goal, and the ball, after bouncing about all over the place, was eventually headed into the net by Brogan, the ball just going inside the far post in the tamest fashion it is possible to imagine. It was evident Mitchell expected Dunn to clear this particular effort, and the Luton back certainly shaped as if to head the ball away, but apparently he thought it was just a shade too high for him to get control, and he ducked down to allow it to go over his head, quite expecting Mitchell was in position, but unfortunately this was not the case. It was impossible for the Luton goalkeeper to get at the ball coming so unexpectedly, and, to the delight and surprise of the Bristol crowd it was found resting in the net. Just before half-time, from a left-wing raid, Simms found himself in a good position for scoring, but again he fired the ball well over the bar, and thus spoilt Luton's chance of crossing level with their opponents.

Early in the second half it was observed that Luton were doing better than before, and the Rovers' goal had a very lucky escape with Stansfield out of position, but Mason dropped back and cleared from almost under the bar. The ball was forced into the net by Simms and Rollinson in combination, but the point did not count because one of them handled just before netting. Rollinson on another occasion looked very favourably placed, but the referee gave him offside—a doubtful decision, by the way. Just on time, Roberts practically skimmed the bar with a fine shot taken under difficulties, and it would have been no injustice to the Rovers if this shot had equalised matters, for Luton were evidently trying hard to keep up their unbroken sequence of away points since Jan. 23rd, and fully deserved to draw on the run of the game all through.

The Rovers have been poorly supported this season, and there would not be more than 3,500 spectators on the ground at any time during the game, but at the finish they were inclined to flatter themselves that at last the club were out of danger, especially when the results from Southend and Croydon came through, for neither of the clubs in question can now reach higher than the present score of the Rovers, and a single slip on the part of either Croydon or Southend will put the Bristol Club absolutely safe, even if they lose both their remaining games.