

FOOTBALL NOTES AND NEWS.

Luton's away record spoiled in the West.

The fact that Bristol Rovers figured lower on the list than Luton did not make the task of keeping up the wonderful away record any easier on Saturday. Indeed it is generally recognised that the most difficult club to beat in the last month of the season is one in the danger zone with a possible chance of escape from the dreaded "bottom two." The home officials were openly very anxious as to the result, and in the concluding stages when Luton were attacking their anxiety was most marked. The game itself was by no means a good one, apart from the result, which, of course, pleased the 4,000 spectators present. There was little or no method about the forward work on either side, and the defences were seen to the greater advantage all through. Curiously the only goal of the match was in the nature of a fluke. Anyway, it must be considered an extremely lucky goal, and took everyone by surprise.

Luton's original selections included Roe and Bob Hawkes, but on Friday the former player reported himself as not too confident of his leg standing, and therefore exchanged places with Wileman who was down to play with the Reserves. The other alteration was brought about by an incident which will at once arouse the sympathies of all Lutonians, inasmuch that during the previous night the father of Luton's popular captain passed away. It was not until Saturday morning that this was known, and there was little time to obtain a substitute, but Wilson was sent for and took the vacant position.

Bristol have not been altogether happy in their relations with their players in this trying season, and it was quite a different combination which faced Luton from the one which suffered defeat in October. In their extremity this holiday the local officials have fallen back on one of their old amateurs of two or three seasons ago in W. Hurley, and he has proved of very valuable assistance. Against Luton he figured at outside left, and was the most dangerous forward they had, although he was somewhat unorthodox in his methods. The names of the teams were:—

Luton:—Mitchell; Elvey and Dunn; F. Hawkes, Prith and Wilson; Roberts, Wileman, Simms, Rolinson, and Hear.

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

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

The feature of the opening stages was the fine sprints Hurley made on the left wing, and as he usually centred the ball with good judgment it meant that the Luton defensive brigade were pretty hardly worked to keep their opponents out. A trifle more steadiness on the part of the Rovers' inside man would have given them an early lead, but they were obviously excited, and this affected their play, and as a consequence Mitchell did not have the dangerous shots the openings provided by Hurley's tactics should have brought along. Crompton had a comparatively easy opening from one of these left wing sprints, the ball travelling direct to the ex-Blackburn player with no one but Mitchell to beat, but he weakly sent the ball straight in front several yards wide of the goal for a goal kick.

The Luton forwards naturally made a number of raids on the opposite goal, but very few shots came to Stansfield. Probably the best attempt was made by Wileman, who got a pass from Roberts and let go at goal in characteristic fashion, the ball just missing the far upright. On another occasion Luton threatened danger on the left, but Rollinson in order to get clear pushed Hardman off, and the referee did not fail to notice the infringement, with the result that a free kick was awarded to the Rovers within a few yards of their own goal. As a rule, however, the game was one long series of big kicks by the defenders of both sides, the work of the wingers being generally wasted when the ball was sent into the danger zone by the ineffectiveness of the inside players.

Twelve minutes before the interval the spectators were cheered by the scoring of a very lucky goal by Brogan, and as events turned out this settled the point. The ball was bouncing about for a second or so without anyone getting real control a few yards out of the Luton goal, when Brogan headed in. As Dunn seemed to block the way scarcely anyone expected this attempt would find the net. Evidently Dunn thought Mitchell was just behind him, for he ducked to let the ball go to his comrade, but at the moment Mitchell was nearer the other end of his charge and, taken by surprise, could not get across in time to prevent the ball entering the net. On the run of the play the Rovers just about deserved their lead at the interval, but it was very moderate football indeed. Interval:—

Bristol Rovers 1, Luton 0.

In the second half Luton were seen to greater advantage, and a pass back from the goal line by Simms found Hoar nicely placed for a shot at goal. The Luton outside left tried a sharp ground drive, but Stansfield just managed to stop it taking effect by dropping down to the ball close to the upright. A few minutes later Simms and Rollinson together rushed the ball into the net, but apparently Rollinson handled before he passed the ball over to Simms, and it was brought back for a free kick. The same two players were responsible for another promising attack on the Rovers' goal, which was stopped in a similar manner, namely, a free kick against Luton inside the home penalty area for some infringement or other, which was not apparent from the Press box.

The exchanges were certainly more lively towards the finish than in the first half, mainly because Luton were making a better fight, and the crowd were kept on tenter-hooks right up to the final whistle. Roberts went the nearest to scoring when he snapped up a nice punt up the field by Elvey, and with a first-time drive sent the ball just over the bar with Stansfield well beaten. It was a very good attempt under the circumstances, and if Roberts had equalized it would have been a fair representation of the actual run of the game, for if the Rovers enjoyed the better of the first half Luton turned the tables in the second. Result:—

Bristol Rovers 1, Luton 0.

Luton play their last home Southern League

match of the season—it may be for more than one season—next Saturday, when Croydon Common, still struggling to escape another experience of the Second Division, will be their visitors. An extra match on the Town ground is, however, furnished by the final for the Southern Charity Cup, in which Plymouth Argyle are to oppose the Blues next Monday.