

# FROM THE FOOTBALL FIELD

## WILL LUTON TAKE THE WOODEN SPOON?

A month ago when Northampton recaptured at Luton the two Southern League points they lost to the Blues at home one of the Luton Town remarked that about the only consolation left was that the club could not very well sink to the bottom of the League table. At that time the director appeared on pretty safe ground, for Gillingham were well down, but Easter week has altered the complexion of affairs. While Gillingham have won three of their last four games the Blues have failed to notch a solitary victory in their six matches, and the five games played since Good Friday have brought but a couple of points. The result is Gillingham are only five points behind Luton with a game in hand, and the Kentish team's recent form suggests capability to make up the deficiency unless the Blues display marked improvement. Northampton have done as badly as Luton during the holidays in capturing only a brace of points and a slightly superior goal average enables the Blues to lead them, while Newport County are a point to the good with a game less to play. If relegation were at stake it would have been rather an interesting issue.

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The most disappointing of all Luton's Easterweek performances were their failure at home against Brentford on Saturday, and it was also about the poorest and tamest exhibition seen from Southern League teams on the Town ground this season. There was mis-kicking galore in every department of both teams, the attempts at combination were of the crudest and the snail-like pace at which the play was carried on made it just about the limit for dullness. One can only attribute such an exhibition to the treacherous condition of a heavy pitch, and to the fact that the players were suffering from the effects of holiday strain, but even making these allowances there was a good deal of justification for the despairing entreaties some of the five or six thousand spectators felt constrained to urge upon the players to "play up."

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The holiday games had left the Blues with practically half their first choice eleven in a more or less unfit condition. Ratherford, Hoar and Simms were hopeless to rely upon, but the others had to be called into service as "Newman" and a soldier half-back he was expected to bring did not turn up. Brentford were not in quite such a bad plight, but lacked some familiar faces, the most notable being Hendren, the popular winger. Appended are the teams:—

Luton.—Summers; Elvey. Dunn; F. Hawkes, Urwin, Parker; Grimes, Hill, Tomlinson, Higginbotham, Bookman.

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Brentford.—Durstun; Hodson, Rosier; Morris, Taylor, Ashford; Gilboy, Thompson, Spreadbury, Embury, Cartmell.

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Referee: Mr. J. Talks, Lincoln.

Right from the start the players showed no promise of settling down, and there was not even an element of dash and go to make up for the lack of quality football. For the first twenty minutes the Blues did what pressing there was, except for once or twice when the backs displayed amazing shakiness in kicking, but about the only time the homesters got really dangerous was when Grimes landed a lovely centre right in front of goal, and Bookman drove a first-timer disappointingly over the bar. Then Brentford suddenly broke away, and Gilboy made tracks down the wing. When an appeal against him for offside was disregarded things looked dangerous, for his centre was a nice one, and Thompson took it so nicely that there was no surprise when he landed the ball in the net. Before it reached there, however, offside was whistled. Brentford did not at all relish the decision, and there was a good deal of difference of opinion about it. The rest of the half was all Luton's, for on the few occasions the visitors broke away they generally found Elvey and Dunn waiting for them, or else Dunn putting them offside. In the Blues attack the only inspiring feature was a series of sparkling runs by Bookman. Higginbotham was doing as well as he has done for Luton, and Bookman made good use of his well-judged passes and got across some gems of centres. From one of these Tomlinson had Durston in difficulties, with a header, and this was not the only occasion the lengthy goalie from Clapham fumbled in his clearances, but his most severe testing came in the last three minutes, when Fred Hawkes dashed through and wound up with a lovely shot which Durston's height enabled him to get over the bar.

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The first five minutes of the second half brought promises of improvement. Bookman got clear away to the corner flag and dropped in a centre which Tomlinson should have converted, but the centre failed to trap the ball, and had to pass to Higginbotham, who was offside, and not a scorer in any case. Then Summers caught a beauty from Gilboy just under the bar, and Durston repeated the feat from Higginbotham, while the latter and Dartnell also drove just wide at the respective ends in quick succession. After this there was a return to mediocrity. Higginbotham on the one side and the Brentford wingers on the other occasionally raised hopes, but there was not a semblance of effective combination in either team, and the backs did pretty well as they pleased. Rarely were the goalkeepers called into action, and neither side struck one as capable of scoring. Brentford had two glorious chances in the last ten minutes, Thompson and Embury blazing over with the goal at their mercy, but nothing could have been fairer than the result.

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The game calls for no individual comment on the players. All were off colour, with the exception of the goalkeepers, who had little opportunity to shine, and while the weaknesses of some were more pronounced than others, it would be invidious to make comparisons. What honours there were went to the defence, all four backs doing well after a