

FROM THE FOOTBALL FIELD.

What price Luton for promotion now? Five points in three games, three of them gained away from home, have carried the Town club into the top five of the Third Division with a record of: Played 27, won 12, lost 8, drawn 7, goals for 43, goals against 59, points 31.

Prior to North End must have felt more than a passing interest in some of the Third Division games on Saturday, for while they were losing at home to Bolton Wanderers, Watford whom they had a harder job to beat in the next cup round than the score suggests, were also going under at home to Reading, against whom Luton on Wednesday piled up their biggest score of the season. This 6-0 victory went a long way to wipe out the 3-1 defeat to Swindon, but if the Town had been all over they could easily have completely wiped it out for after the first twenty minutes Reading were not in the picture. At the end of sixteen minutes Weston steered the ball by Bailey, but used his hands in the process, and two minutes later Simms opened an account which ran to four within fifteen minutes, Hear, Higginbotham and Simms being the agents. Between the last two goals Smith, the 17-in. captain, left the field with his little finger damaged, and the one-back game enabled Reading to stem the tide up to the interval but after change of ends they were completely outclassed. Simms scored two more, thus achieving his third hat-trick and best scoring performance of the season, but even so he should have had more the halves, Hear, Higginbotham, and Butcher providing glorious chances galore.

With the cup overshadowing everything both at Luton and Southend, Saturday's game at Southend did not create the usual interest, although the result was really important to both sides for entirely different reasons. The Southend club officials are getting just a wee bit anxious on the score of relegation, whereas a couple of points for Luton at Southend would have put them among the "probables" instead of the "possibles" for promotion. It cannot be claimed Luton have done particularly well against the Seaside. As a matter of fact they have up to Saturday met fourteen times, including cup-ties, and the honours were equally divided with five wins, five matches lost, and four drawn games, and the position is not materially altered as a result of Saturday's game for the figure five now covers draws also.

Luton turned out the "cup team," but Southend were compelled to make changes, and in view of the important game the following week this perhaps rather strengthened the side than otherwise, as naturally the reserves introduced were inclined to take risks. The names of the players who turned out were: Luton: Bailey; Lennon and Tirrell; Molyneux, Parker and Lamb; Hear, Higginbotham, Simms, Butcher and Bookman. Southend: Capper; Lawson and Newton; Wilman, Henderson and Martin; Nicholls, Nuttall, Fairclough, Walters and Dorsett.

Referee, Mr. J. E. Evans (London).

The game opened fast and both sets of forwards made promising attacks without causing either goalkeeper really serious anxiety, although one or two corners were forced at either end. However, after ten minutes' play a well executed movement from the Southend forwards culminated in a goal for the home side. Dorsett on the left got nicely away and passing the ball over to Fairclough, the home centre took it on the run and with a flying shot just skimmed the bar. Apparently Bailey just touched the ball, for a corner was awarded. This was taken by Nicholls, who dropped it well in the danger zone. Nuttall neatly headed the ball into the net, catching the Luton defence unawares, for no effort was made to prevent his getting the ball.

Luton were soon attacking again, but they could not get a clear opening, although once Butcher got a shot well towards the goal, Lawson just managing to charge it down. Although a goal ahead, the Seaside were not having more of the game than Luton, and when after half-an-hour's play the equaliser came along even the most rabid Southender could not complain on the score of justice. The goal goes down to keep Simms at the top

must be awarded to Bookman, for it was his cleverness and speed which brought about the opening. Previously the Luton wing had been most unfortunate when the ball came over to the left, for time after time the whistle went either for hands or offside, but this time Bookman, shaking off all opposition, left the field standing and ended up with a beautiful coupe for Simms to convert. Capper managed to smother the ball at first, but could not clear his lines, and Simms had merely to tap the ball through for the equaliser.

From this point up to the interval Luton certainly appeared likely winners, for their work was altogether more convincing, but five minutes before half-time an unfortunate accident to Bookman weakened their forces. In dashing forward to meet the ball the Luton winger was rather badly injured and rolled over in apparent agony. Many imagined he was taken in a fit not having noticed his contact with the ball, and with no opponent within charging distance the cause was not apparent to the spectators. Lawson had just retired to the dressing-room to prepare for the players at the interval, but the players of both teams came to the rescue and Bookman was carried off the field, Luton playing one short for the remaining minutes.

When the players returned for the second half it was observed Bookman was in position, but he was not able to put quite the same enthusiasm into his sprints and naturally the side was handicapped materially. Southend were assisted by quite a long series of corner kicks, but Bailey was in good form and brought off several fine saves. Only once did he appear likely to be beaten and then he flung himself among a crowd of players and cleared the ball in great style to the bewilderment of the crowd at that end of the field. Although the Luton goal was hotly assailed for a prolonged period actually the home custodian was the more likely to be beaten, for there always appeared more probability of a score when the Luton forwards got down the field, and Capper did not shape any too confidently, but he managed to keep all attempts at bay. Right on the finish Hoar got across a fine centre and it seemed Simms would be able to add a second goal to his tally for the day, for he was unmarked, but the ball rose awkwardly and he did not get a clean kick at it and it passed just wide of the upright with Capper helpless if the aim had been true.

Result: Luton 1, Southend 1.