

THE SOUTHERN LEAGUE.

LUTON TOWN v. MILLWALL ATHLETIC.

Played at Luton on Saturday. Result :—

Millwall Athletic.....	4 goals.
Luton Town.....	3 goals.

The teams were as follow :—

RIGHT.	LUTON TOWN.				LEFT.
	Bee (goal).				
	M. D. Nicholson.		McEwen.		
	Watkins.		M'Crindle.		Howe.
Gallacher.	Finlayson.	Galbraith.	Allen.	Prentice	
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Geddes.	M'Kenzie.	Robertson.	Wilson.	W. Jones.	
	H. Matthews.	J. Matthews.		King.	
	Davies.		Graham.		
	Walker (goal).				
LEFT.	MILLWALL ATHLETIC.				RIGHT.

Referee, Mr. N. Whittaker; linesmen, Messrs. W. G. Wheeler (Luton), and A. Kidd (Millwall).

Thank goodness it's all over. It has been hanging about me like a nightmare for the last week, and I have not known a moment's peace. Waking or sleeping, it has been just the same, and between thinking and dreaming, I've about had enough of it. It's been Millwall and Luton, and then by way of variation, Luton and Millwall, but precious little else.

On Friday evening I went to bed early with a view to getting a good night's rest, and being up with the larks in the morning. I was anxious about reaching the ground time enough to secure my seat. But, bless you, I couldn't sleep. It was Millwall and Luton, Luton and Millwall, and there I lay comparing one with the other, Nicholson with Graham, McEwen with Davies, and so on throughout the teams.

At last I fell into a troubled sort of slumber, but I was awake again long before it was light in the morning, and then in imagination I went through the whole blessed match. Now I could see Gallacher and Finlayson doing a sprint up the field, then followed a good centre, and "shoot" shouted the whole multitude which I had conjured up as Galbraith obtained possession of the ball.

Then by way of a change—Luton were doing all the pressing, it must be remembered—Galbraith and Allen did the trundling, and a splendid pass enabled Prentice to head into the net, but, hang it all, offside against the little 'un spoilt the whole affair. And so it went on. Nicholson and McEwen bulked largely in my morning dreams, and it was delightful to picture them bottling up Geddes, M'Kenzie, and Jones.

I wonder how far my experience coincided with that of other Lutonians. I guess there were a good many troubled sleepers among Luton footballers on Friday night, and I guess also that any number of them woke up earlier on Saturday morning than they had done for many a long day before.

Therefore, I say again, thank goodness it's over. A jolly good football match is all very well in its way, but I am afraid that if we had a succession of these Millwall encounters, there would be an alarming increase of lunacy in Luton, and the county authorities would be still more troubled in finding accommodation at Arlesey.

But when in the course of my morning cogitations I worked out a victory for Luton by the satisfactory margin of a couple of goals, I had quite forgotten to take the referee into account. This, as I afterwards found out, made all the difference in the world, and I still hold that my mental calculations would have turned out to be correct had "fair rations" been served out all round.

Saturday's match was far and away the most interesting in the south of England, and, as was anticipated, the gate proved to be a record one. People flocked in from St. Albans, Harpenden, and Dunstable, and from the villages round about Luton, three hundred persons coming from the Hertfordshire city, while the inhabitants of Strawpolls turned out in far larger numbers than usual.

Then, in addition, somewhere about five hundred people came down from London, the attendance altogether numbering fully five thousand. The grand stand, in spite of the recent enlargement, proved all too small to accommodate those who sought a place there, but I should say that considerably over a thousand persons crowded on to it.

And they took their seats early, too, a good many of them, the stand being half filled three-quarters of an hour before the time announced for the kick-off. Fortunately, the Red Cross Band came and enlivened the period of waiting with a selection of their best football music, though I am afraid there are no goal-getters in their repertoire—they're too solemn.

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The weather was not particularly cheerful, but happily the rain held off, and as it was not cold, the spectators were able to watch the game with some degree of comfort. The ground, however, was on the slippery side, and the greasy state of the ball rendered the play somewhat difficult.

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Speculations as to the result of the match had been rife among southern footballers for some days previous to Saturday, but the London scribes had naturally put their whole pile on the Dockers, who were to win by a margin varying from one to four goals, the latter being the forecast which one belated journalist had the conscience to put forward. Consequently the East Enders were pretty sure of winning.

* * *

Millwall came down with a confident air,
Intent on giving Luton a beating;
They fancied they'd win with something to spare,
And promised each other a treating.

* * *

And if the Dockers have often been indulged by a complacent referee to the extent they were on Saturday, I think it will generally be admitted that that confident air was not out of place.

* * *

Admitting, as I am bound to, that Mr. Nat Whittaker is a perfectly honourable man, and that his decisions on this occasion were given conscientiously and to the best of his ability, I am forced to the conclusion that his peculiarities were due to some defect of vision.

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Apparently, Mr. Whittaker's decisions were given according to the rule of contrary, and free kicks which should have gone to Luton went to the other side. In fact, there is not a shadow of doubt that the unsatisfactory nature of the refereeing did more to demoralise the home team than any efforts put forward by the Dockers.

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I am not exaggerating in the least when I say that it became absolutely dangerous for the Lutonians to appeal against any infringement of the rules by their opponents, for the probability was that the penalty would be given against Luton. These extraordinary vagaries on the part of Mr. Nat Whittaker completely took the heart out of the Luton team.

* * *

To swallow a camel and strain at a gnat,
Is what we are often supposed to be at;
But strange though it may seem, I will tell you flat
Place a couple of teams in charge of a (g)Nat,
And whether the camel be little or fact
I'd swallow it sooner than a (g)Nat like that.

* * *

I have so often had to criticise the conduct of the Luton spectators that it is a pleasure to be able to congratulate them upon their behaviour on this occasion. Beyond a few (under the circumstances) comparatively mild demonstrations of disapproval of the referee's decisions, they refrained from giving vent to their feelings, and at the close Mr. Whittaker escaped molestation. From what I subsequently heard, however, I am convinced that it was only a sense of loyalty to the Luton committee which prevented a disturbance.

* * *

Football is a poor game without boots. Rather than play with bare feet, go and inspect the stock of Football Boots at Freeman, Hardy, and Willis, Limited, 38, George-street, Luton. Prices to suit all, largest stock to select from. Being manufacturing retailers of all kinds of Boots and Shoes, Freeman, Hardy and Willis supply direct to the purchaser. Over 200 branches throughout England.—[ADVT.]

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The game was advertised to commence at half-past three, and soon after that time the homesters made their appearance on the field and came in for a good deal of cheering, Nicholson in particular being accorded quite an ovation. The Millwall players, too, were loudly applauded, and the spectators eagerly sought out Geddes, of whose fame they had heard so much.

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McEwen won the toss, but no advantage was derived therefrom, there being no wind to interfere with the play. Robertson kicked off, and Geddes speedily made his presence known, getting in a good centre, from which McEwen cleared. Gallacher was next the victim of a very deliberate foul by H. Matthews, and Luton getting away from a long kick by Nicholson, Galbraith shot, and Walker saved at the expense of a corner.

* * *

Gallacher placed, and Finlayson putting in, Gallacher rushed up and looked for all the world like scoring, but the leather whizzed just by the opposite post. As it touched one of the Millwallites in its progress, a second corner was given, and this time Prentice placed beautifully, but after M'Crindle had made an attempt, the Dockers succeeded in clearing.

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Howe sent back again, and two or three miskicks by the Millwall defenders let in Allen, but Walker ran out and averted the danger, while directly after Freddie spoiled Galbraith and sent terribly wide himself. The

Dockers now got away, but Geddes was off-side, and Prentice made matters level by getting in the same predicament at the other end.

Then a miss by Nicholson nearly proved fatal, Geddes sending in a terrific low shot, but Bee saved splendidly. A corner followed, and from this Finlayson gave another by heading over. Just after this was taken, Gallacher was badly tripped up by H. Matthews, but it was not given, though a moment later the Dockers were penalised for fouling M'Crindle.

A long return by Nicholson afforded Prentice an opening, but the little 'un fell just as he was going to shoot. Then Galbraith and J. Matthews got bestowing more attention on each other than was warrantable, and the referee, declining to say which was in fault, tossed the ball up.

Following a splendid piece of work by Galbraith, Gallacher received and sent a trifle wide, and then equally effective play by M'Crindle was succeeded by hands for Luton, from which McEwen put behind. The visitors now took a turn, and hands against Howe close up made the spectators hold their breath. The Reds cleared, however, but Gallacher was pulled up for a foul, and Davies, undertaking the kick, sent harmlessly behind.

Then from a big throw-in by Watkins, the ball went dodging about, backwards and forwards in front of goal, until at last Prentice put an end to the suspense by landing the leather in the net. This was after fifteen minutes' play, and tremendous cheering greeted Luton's success.

Encouraged by this little performance, the home forwards went at it again, showing up capitally, and Prentice headed the wrong side of the upright. After an excellent but ineffective display by Gallacher, Geddes got away and shot across the mouth of goal, but though Jones was almost under the crossbar at the time, he let the opportunity slip by.

A foul given against Nicholson close in goal looked bad, but the ball was put through without anyone interfering with its progress. After this, two or three fouls were given against Galbraith, but the Millwall centre half, who was the chief sinner, escaped scot free. A little later, Matthews kicked Galbraith, and though the latter did not follow the scriptural injunction to return a kiss for a blow, he went very near to it, throwing his arms round Matthew's neck.

Once more the referee was driven to the expedient of tossing the ball up, but immediately afterwards the visitors were accorded a free kick. A splendid centre by Geddes, Bee fisted out, and a minute afterwards Wilson got clear and seemed certain to score, but McEwen was a little too quick for him and averted the danger in fine style.

Another free kick for the Millwallites ought to have been followed by one for Luton, H. Matthews using his hands to Finlayson, but it was not granted. Subsequently, Finlayson was even more badly used, the other Matthews embracing him in quite an illegitimate fashion. The referee's attention was called to the circumstance, and he gave a foul—against Luton, a decision which was vigorously hooted.

Galbraith and Allen next attracted attention by a good bit of work, but just as the former got dangerous, he was knocked clean head over heels off the ball. He was up again directly, however, and the home forwards showing excellent combination, Finlayson finished up with a grand shot, which Walker negotiated.

Both sides now attacked in turn, Galbraith and Geddes leading for their respective sides, and then the whistle sounded for hands, J. Matthews being the culprit, but again the free kick was given against Luton. Before it could be taken, however, the referee tootled again, and the teams changed ends with Luton leading by a goal to nil.

Luton were all right up till now. But the play had been of a somewhat disappointing character, neither side, I should say, having shown their best form. Certainly, Luton had not, for though the homesters worked hard, they did not work together as nicely as usual.

The Red Cross Band having filled up the interval with a couple of selections, and one collection, hostilities were resumed, and a big kick by Graham gave Geddes a decent opening, but the shot was easily saved by Bee. Twice after this McEwen miskicked, but he soon recovered himself and sent the ball up the field.

Gallacher galloped away and provided Walker with a job, and then a series of misses by the Millwall defenders let in the Luton forwards. Galbraith received from Gallacher and sent into goal, giving Allen a chance which ought to have been turned to account, but the ball went outside.

Soon afterwards the Dockers made tracks for the home goal, but McEwen stopped the rush. For some unaccountable reason, however, the referee penalised Luton for a foul, and J. Matthews turning the ball over to his brother, the latter scored with a ridiculously easy shot, Bee having had his equilibrium upset by Jones.

The goal was allowed, and the Dockers congratulating themselves on their good luck, infused more spirit than ever into their play. There was an exciting struggle round the home goal, but eventually a clearance was effected, and after a good run on the Luton right wing, Galbraith received and just missed the mark with an overhead kick.

At this point, a dispute arose between Mr. Whittaker and Graham. The referee ordered a new ball, but when it arrived, Graham threw it away. The referee remaining firm, the ball was fetched back and play proceeded. Seemingly, it was a very fortunate change for the Dockers, as almost immediately they got down, and Jones middling, Wilson hit the bar, and McKenzie meeting, promptly put the ball through.

The visitors were greatly elated at this, and shook hands all round. The majority of the spectators, it is needless to say, did not feel inclined to follow their example. When the ball was restarted, the Dockers repeated their attack, and a shocking decision by the referee again placed the home goal in danger. Robertson had got possession, and upon being tackled by McEwen, he deliberately punched the ball with his fist. Mr. Whittaker gave hands against Luton.

If the onlookers testified their disapproval in unmistakable fashion, it is scarcely to be wondered at. They would have been more than human had they done otherwise. The free kick was not turned to advantage, but directly afterwards the Dockers got down again, and Geddes, eluding Nicholson, put in goal. Bee saved, but the Millwall left winger got on the ball again and registered a third point with a shot which looked anything but difficult, it dropping just under the bar.

At this juncture the Reds appeared to be going all to pieces, and no sooner had a fresh start been made, than the visitors again resumed their aggressive tactics. Watkins for once in a way got into a muddle through thinking the ball was going behind, but Geddes centred, and after a bit J. Matthews sent in a grand low shot which completely beat Bee and scored the fourth goal.

It seemed to be all up with Luton's chances now, but strangely enough the homesters pulled themselves together in splendid style, giving the Millwall defence a very warm time of it. Walker saved from Galbraith, and after Allen had neutralised a rare opening by getting off-side, McEwen sent on to Prentice, who missed by inches only. It was a fine shot, and the spectators shouted, thinking it had taken effect.

Galbraith next followed up a first-rate bit of play with a shot which Walker could only get rid of by giving a corner. This was well placed, and the Luton centre forward once more made a desperate struggle to get through, but it fell to Finlayson's lot to do the trick, he scoring with a regular beauty.

Going at it for all they were worth, Luton forced another corner, and this was splendidly judged by Prentice, but H. Matthews cleared by kicking out. From the throw-in, Watkins sent to Galbraith, who headed wide. From a middle by Gallacher, Allen got in a clinker, but Walker effected a fine save. Then M'Crindle sent up, and Prentice and Galbraith having assisted the ball towards the desired haven, it at last found a resting place there through the instrumentality of Gallacher.

During this last quarter of an hour Luton had had all the play, and with a few minutes in hand, I fancy they would have altered the verdict. But the referee was prompt with the call of time, and a very unsatisfactory game ended in a win for Millwall by four goals to three.

Immediately the whistle blew, Mr. Isaac Smith took charge of Mr. Whittaker, and perhaps it was just as well that he did, as a considerable number of persons showed a disposition to have a closer look at that gentleman's features than they had been able to get during the progress of the game. But happily, they confined their attention to looking, and there was nothing approaching disorder.

As already stated, the game was not of a brilliant description, but as far as could be judged, the teams were about evenly matched, and it is a pity they were prevented from fighting it out fairly and squarely by those extraordinary peculiarities on the part of the referee to which allusion has been made. Mr. Whittaker may have done his best, but all I can say is, that his best was very bad.

As to the visitors, they played a hard game, but they were very far from an ideal team, their combination being anything but perfect. Geddes is head and shoulders above the other forwards in ability, though not in stature, and what few chances he did get he turned to account. It was very seldom, however, that he could succeed in shaking off Watkins, who watched him very closely.

The half-backs were not too particular in their methods, indulging their tripping propensities very freely. But though they were desperate tacklers, and stuck at nothing to gain possession of the ball, they altogether lacked the essential qualification for good half-backs, viz., the art of judiciously feeding the forwards.

Graham and Davies played a strong game at back, and while at times a trifle erratic, their exhibition, taken as a whole, was a grand one. Walker in goal struck me as being exceedingly weak, and when he saved I think it was more by luck than judgment.

For the losers, Galbraith was undoubtedly the best of the forwards; in fact, he was the best forward on the field. He worked hard all the way through, though for the matter of that all the others did the same. Finlayson at first was not quite up to concert pitch, but he subsequently improved, and he and Gallacher put in a lot of good play. Prentice acquitted himself very creditably indeed, and Allen worked like a nigger, but luck was against him.

McCrindle again demonstrated his ability as a centre half, his display being a first-rate one in every respect. Howe had quite recovered his old form, and did his side yeoman service, while Watkins, who was told off to watch Geldes, carried out his instructions to the letter.

That McEwen should now and then make a miskick was not at all surprising, seeing the vast amount of work that he did. He proved a stumbling-block for the Millwall forwards. Nicholson, however, was very much off-colour, but this was hardly a cause for wonderment, seeing that he had not touched a ball since last March. I wish that he were going to play regularly for us, instead of in League matches only, for even a crack player requires systematic practice.

Bee in goal made some very good saves, but at the same time one or two of Millwall's successful shots hardly deserved to score. Still, his custodianship was not a bad one by any means, and he was an infinitely better man than the goal-keeper on the other side.

I am extremely sorry that the match terminated as it did, but under the circumstances I do not regard it as proving the superiority of the Millwall team. They possess more dash, it is true, and are smarter on the ball, but I don't think they are as capable as Luton of giving an exposition of the game as it should be played.

By the way, why can't a couple of Monday matches be arranged with the Dockers? I should think they would be mutually satisfactory to both clubs, as the gates both here and at Millwall would be sure to be good.

Saturday's gate was a record one amounting to just over £107. If we could only do this every week!

Mr. Vincent E. Holland, Battersea, London, writes me as follows:—"Sir,—I should like through your paper to express my indignation and disgust at the refereeing Luton Town v. Millwall. I witnessed the match as a Londoner, and should have been glad to congratulate Millwall, but I consider the win was entirely due to the unsatisfactory nature of the refereeing. Wishing Luton Town better treatment in their future encounters,—I remain," etc.

Three other matches in the first division of the Southern League were played on Saturday, and the one which took place at the Spotted Dog between Clapton and the Royal Ordnance shows pretty conclusively that the latter won't succeed in attaining that position in the League which it was generally thought they would. They were badly beaten by the Claptonians by five goals to one.

As was anticipated, Southampton St. Mary's were well able to dispose of Chatham on the ground of the former, the Saints scoring three goals to one obtained by Chatham. I shall be greatly surprised if in the course of this League competition, the Saints do not cause a lot of trouble to some of the better known combinations.

Swindon went to Ilford, and sustained a third defeat, but it was not a big one this time, the Essex people only getting home by a goal to nil. Poor old Swindon! I'm afraid they won't get to the top of the tree.

A serious accident to footballers may often occur by being badly booted. The boot recommended to prevent these accidents, is the Rugby and Association Boot, patented, price 6s. 11d., sold by Freeman, Hardy and Willis, Limited, 38, George-street, Luton. For the money it is a marvel. It gives the greatest satisfaction to hundreds of players. For Gent's Smart and Durable Walking Boots at 3s. 11d., 4s. 11d., and 5s. 11d., see Freeman, Hardy, and Willis' windows. They are the largest retailers in the kingdom.—[ADVT.]

The *Athletic World* says:—"The conduct of some of the spectators at Luton on Saturday, was little short of disgraceful, Mr. Whittaker, the referee, being followed by a howling and jeering section from the ground to his hotel. Surely the Luton committee can do something to obviate this nuisance. If they do not, they will get into trouble with the Football Association, and if matters are allowed to go on as at present it is only a question of time when a referee will get mobbed. I have distinctly unpleasant personal recollections of the Luton crowd."

What utter nonsense! But the last sentence is the richest. If I mistake not, these "distinctly unpleasant personal recollections" are possessed by a gentleman who officiated at the last match of the season 1892-3. He was advertised as the football editor of a certain London journal, but his conduct as referee was so ludicrous, that the crowd did not for a moment think of taking him seriously. The mess he made of it was simply awful, and I marvel much that he has the hardihood to recall such "distinctly unpleasant personal recollections." Poor old Rennie!

The Southern League has come to stay, says the journal above referred to. The interest shown in the early matches is but a forerunner of what is certain to come, and Saturday's game between Millwall Athletic and Luton Town gives one a very fair idea of the overwhelming amount of interest which will be taken in the League matches in the future. The new organisation, too, has met with many friends, and before the season is over a number of representative matches will be played. It is quite on the cards that these games will include fixtures with the first division of the Football League, the London Association, the Middlesex Association, the Casuals, and at least one leading League team. A policy of enterprise will do much to make the League popular with the general public.

The Luton Reserves appear to have had as unfortunate an experience at Millwall as the premier team had here. Mr. E. H. Jackson, the gentleman appointed to referee, was a little late, it seems, and Mr. Clarke, a Millwall committeeman, was so eager to fulfil the duties, that he positively declined to give way to Mr. Jackson when that gentleman arrived. Luton claim that they were the actual winners of the game, and their view is borne out, I am told, by Mr. Jackson, who played the part of the spectator.

The match on Saturday will be with the City Ramblers in the English Cup competition. Luton, of course, should win, but all the same for that I hope the homesters will not make the mistake of looking at the affair as a dead cert. The Ramblers are playing up rather strongly just now, and for this occasion they will strengthen their team as far as they possibly can. Be it remembered, they accounted for the 2nd Scots Guards recently.

The City Ramblers team will be as follows: J. May goal; C. McGahey (capt.), and G. Ritchie, backs; W. Ingram, D. Hamer, and F. J. Bentley, half-backs; George Meggs and J. W. Meggs, right; W. H. Nolloth, centre; W. H. Bentley and M. Poole, left wing forwards. Linesman. J. R. Warren (Ilford F.C.)

Not having heard anything of Gorman for some time, that player has been suspended, and the Town Committee have applied to the Association to cancel his registration. The Committee will be advertising for a new back next week.

On Monday, Kettering will visit Luton, and then, again, will come the meeting of war. The Ketts are a fine lot this season, and will take a deal of beating. I hope the Reds will be on their best behaviour. The home team on Saturday will be as usual, but on Monday, Dimmock will be given another trial.

The Reinstatement Committee completed their labours on Saturday evening, and among the gentlemen who have been passed, we find the following:—M. D. Nicholson, West Bromwich Albion; J. W. Julian, J. Wilson, J. Simkins, and H. Whitby, Luton Town; C. J. Ambler, T. Bryan, and A. Elliott, Woolwich Arsenal; D. M'Nair and R. Ord, Ironopolis; and W. F. Croxon, Sheffield United.

I notice a local writer has fallen foul of me in a London paper. I do not complain; it amuses him and it doesn't hurt me. For a long time past I have entertained a profound veneration for the wisdom of the gentleman in question, and I regret that on this occasion that wisdom has found expression in extremely ungrammatical language. To explain the passages quoted from these columns, the writer gives three sentences of his own, and each one is a delightful specimen of "English as she is spoke."

"It is greatly to be regretted" that the writer should have been so "lavish" in phrases which a grammarian would hardly countenance, for even if his statements contained "a modicum of truth," I think his wisdom might have been more "abundantly demonstrated" in other directions. "Perhaps I may be permitted to remark"—in fact, "it is desirable to plainly state"—that the scribe might with advantage "utilise" his critical abilities nearer home, and "thereafter" hold his peace.