

FOOTBALL.

LUTON AND THE SOUTHERN LEAGUE.

MILLWALL ATHLETIC AT LUTON.

A DEFEAT FOR THE HOMESTERS.

Saturday was an important day in the football history of Luton, for then the Town Club signalled their entry into the Southern League by meeting Millwall Athletic. The latter had commenced well in the previous week by ignominiously thrashing Swindon, and this creditable performance led some outsiders to imagine that they would have a fairly easy task in wresting a victory from the "reds." Others who had studied the form of the rival combinations prophesied a closely-fought encounter, and to this category belonged the majority of Lutonians, while not a few were bold enough to mention the probability of a win resulting for the local club. These were doubtless basing their estimate on last season's performance, when Luton managed to defeat the Londoners on the Luton ground—an achievement, by the way, which was unduly minimised in London football circles. For the most part it was agreed that Saturday's game would practically settle the question of the championship, it being generally thought that none of the other organisations which compose the first division of the League would be sufficiently powerful to obtain points at the expense of either Millwall or Luton. Accordingly the match assumed additional importance, and it was looked forward to with eager interest, this anticipation extending to the East End of London as well as to our own town. It was regarded as extremely likely that the attendance would beat all previous records for the ground, and this prognostication proved correct, the spectators numbering certainly not less than 5,000. Of course local enthusiasts turned out in full strength, and contingents of visitors came in from the surrounding neighbourhood, while upwards of 1,000 Londoners were conveyed by a special trip from St. Pancras. The weather in the early part of the day was the reverse of promising, a drizzling rain falling continuously, this serving the double purpose of deciding waverers to stay away and of rendering the ground far from excellent in point of condition. Fortunately the downfall ceased long before the hour announced for the kick-off, and thus matters were somewhat more endurable for the onlookers than would otherwise have been the case, though many eventually were compelled to stand on wet grass during the game. The gates had been announced to open at 2.30, and despite the fact that they would have a weary hour's wait there were a fair number present at that time. A few minutes later spectators began to arrive in considerable detachments, and by 3 o'clock the grand stand was filled and the ropes were lined. The story was "still they come," and when it was found that the available seating accommodation had been exhausted the pavilion was opened and rapidly filled, while a good few were content to accept seats on boards spread in the mud in front of the grand-stand. Presently the Red Cross Band made its appearance under the leadership of Mr. J. T. Ogden, and the players filled up the weary period of waiting by performing some selections in admirable fashion. Meanwhile the incoming stream continued to flow; indeed, it did not cease until after the operations had commenced. The teams were as strong as the respective authorities could make them, and it was agreed that they could not have been improved upon. The Millwall side was almost identical with that which defeated Swindon, while for Luton McCrindle played for the first time since the Finedon match and Nicholson replaced Cheshier at back, that player having signed a professional form to enable him to appear.

The "reds" were first to enter the arena, and they were splendidly received, Nicholson obtaining a particularly hearty greeting. The Athletics were also well applauded. With fair regard for punctuality the teams lined up in the following order:—*Luton Town*: Goal, E. Bee; backs, M. D. Nicholson and J. McEwen (capt.); half-backs, J. Watkins, R. McOrindle, and A. Howe; forwards, W. Gallacher, J. Finlayson (right), H. Galbraith (centre), F. Allen, and W. Prentice (left). *Millwall Athletic*: Goal, C. T. Walker; backs, Graham and Davies; half-backs, King, J. Mathew, and H. Mathew; forwards, W. Jones, J. Wilson (right), Robertson (centre), McKenzie and Geddes (left). Despite a protest from Luton Mr. N. Whittaker (hon. sec. of the Southern League) officiated as referee, and the duties of linesmen were discharged by Messrs. F. B. Kidd (Millwall) and W. G. Wheeler (Luton). The home captain obtained choice of ends, and he elected to start towards the pavilion, the absence of wind rendering this piece of good fortune of little value. Robertson commenced the great game, and the first thing that happened was that Gallacher secured and rushed away down the line, only to be smartly pulled up. Geddes thus early rendered himself conspicuous, but McEwen relieved, and then the first foul in the match was awarded against the visitors, Gallacher being the sufferer. The local forwards rushed down the field in determined fashion, and Galbraith sent in a swift, long attempt which tested Walker's powers of defence very severely. The foreign keeper managed to clear, though more by luck than good judgment, and this at the expense of a corner. From the kick Gallacher sent the leather across the mouth of the goal and though no score resulted a second corner fell to the Bedfordshire men. Allen sent out wildly when this had been taken, and the visiting front string raced away to the other end, only to be checked by Geddes getting off-side. Allen atoned for his previous failure by securing pluckily, but Prentice spoiled the effort by infringing the off-side rule. A bad miss by Nicholson looked exceedingly ominous, but Bee stemmed a combined rush of the Athletic forwards, though in doing so he was forced to give a corner. Finlayson from this headed over the cross-bar, thus affording another opportunity to the strangers to line up in front of the home citadel. The siege was quickly raised and the home eleven looked like returning the compliment, when Galbraith was penalised for an alleged foul, the centre man declining to allow the affair to pass without exchanging a few words with the referee. A magnificent try by Gallacher missed by very little and this was followed by hands against Millwall; but the free kick was resultless, Allen and Prentice failing to stop the ball when it had reached a point dangerously close to the Millwall lines. The Londoners went to the neighbourhood of Bee's charge, but they were unable to effect anything tangible, the defence being too reliable. Geddes exhibited fine style, and he was emulated by his old club-mate Nicholson, who, performed brilliantly twice in as many minutes, one particularly good example of heading being noted. Hands against Howe in close proximity to goal appeared dangerous, but nothing came of it, and in the next minute Galbraith was seen showing dashing style in mid-field, his tricky dribbling completely nonplussing the opposing half-backs. The Scotsman passed to Prentice ultimately, but that player failed to catch the ball and so it went into touch. A foul against Gallacher was followed by open play in the centre of the ground for some time, and

hereafter the Luton representatives improved their position by means of several throws in. The game had now been in progress about a quarter of an hour, and a tremendous shout of applause hailed the opening of the score by Prentice, who very neatly beat Walker, the enthusiasm being long in subiding. The outside left man was responsible for some admirable efforts immediately afterwards, and he only just failed to convert a capable centre by Gallacher, the ball being headed outside the net. Stimulated by their early success the "reds" attacked hotly, and the opposition defenders had all their work cut out to prevent them piling up goals. One especially narrow escape was recorded, and then Howe was undeservedly punished for an alleged foul. Geddes distinguished himself by a grand centre, and after the Millwall end had been visited the referee aroused the ire of the spectators by awarding a free kick against the homesters on the score that they had handled the ball. Nicholson had been making somewhat undue use of his weight, and he was eventually penalised for fouling. This occurred close to the home fortress, and the ball was sent through from the free kick, though no score followed as it had not touched a second player. A couple of mis-kicks were registered against McCrindle and Finlayson, but McEwen atoned for these by a well-judged effort, while Nicholson displayed good style a little later. Galbraith was stopped for attempting to hold an opponent, and Millwall were immediately afterwards punished for fouling. A minute or two later a dispute occurred in mid field as to an infraction of the rules, and the referee settled it by throwing up the ball. A free kick against the "reds" followed, one of them having played the ball before it touched the ground. Gallacher was responsible for a splendid run along the wing, but he was not allowed to progress very far, his adversaries being too wary. An offence against the rule as to off-side brought the displeasure of the referee upon the Millwallians, and after McEwen had defended in first-rate style Prentice was unfortunate enough to give hands. A bad display by a member of the Millwall team was allowed to pass by Mr. Whitaker, though it was patent to many, and profiting by this let-off Geddes sent in a hot attempt which skimmed the bar. Another extraordinary decision was provocative of considerable hooting; the knight of the whistle decided that Howe had fouled an adversary, but it seemed to a good number of bystanders that the half-back was more sinned against than sinning. The Lutonians went full steam ahead subsequently and a combined onslaught appeared likely to lead to an increase of the score, but Graham dashed in and, using his weight more effectually than seemed desirable, managed to clear. A foul against the visitors was followed by the home forwards giving one of the best exhibitions of the day, their short passing being pretty and effective. Nicholson was beaten a minute or so afterwards, by reason of his being too far up the field, but Geddes steered over the line when a good opening was presented. Hands against the wearers of the blue uniform afforded McEwen a chance to try one of his long kicks, but for once in a way the captain misjudged the distance and sent the leather over the line. Bee was called upon to clear when another miss had been registered against Nicholson, and with hands against Millwall half-time arrived. Up to this stage the leaders had had by far the best of matters, and it was only misfortune that had kept the score so low. The state of the game when ends were changed was:

Luton, one; Millwall, none.

A lengthy rest was allowed the men, the interval being extended to about 10 minutes, during which the Red Cross Band enlivened the proceedings. The Luton section of the onlookers were on good terms with themselves, and doubtless the collection was a profitable one. The visitors led off after the resumption with a great deal more spirit than they had yet infused into their display, and for a time the exchanges were confined to the homesters' territory. McEwen missed not far from goal, and Bee was forced to handle, the custodian acquitting himself worthily. Several throws-in along the line for Luton enabled a transfer of the scene to be effected, and a couple of fouls against the East End still further improved the position of the home or went, though the wished-for goal could not be forced, the visitors receiving a well-

Prentice failed to assist. It should be said that the centre-forward was working splendidly, his accurate passing and unselfish method being worthy of high praise. Millwall improved their position and forced a corner from Watkins, but nothing serious followed. Allen was badly fouled, and the usual free kick enabled Gallacher to give a sample of his trickiness; he finished up with a terrific shot which unfortunately struck the side of the net instead of going through. Intense dissatisfaction was caused by the referee awarding a free kick against Luton, and the disgust was intensified when H. Matthews scored, the ball being neatly turned over to him by J. Matthews. Until this time the Millwall spectators had been fairly quiet, but they now denoted their presence by delighted shouts, and things became lively. After a sturdy struggle near the home goal the game degenerated into a scramble, in the midst of which Allen was penalised for fouling. A display of good style by Gallacher relieved the monotony, and subsequently Luton worked their way into the neighbourhood of Walker's charge, but nothing followed except a goal-kick. An amusing scene took place at this juncture. The ball had become flabby and greasy, and a new one was introduced by Secretary Smith. A throw-in close to the Millwall goal-line had been secured by the "reds," and the London men protested, their refusal to allow the change being disregarded, however. After the leather had gone out of bounds they renewed their protest, but the referee ordered the new ball to be used, and accordingly the malcontents were obliged to give way. The change seemed to work well for the "blues," for in a minute or two McKenzie gave his side the lead. The referee and McEwen got at variance just afterwards, and the next noticeable feature was that Geddes increased the Millwall total. The same player put in further capable efforts, and then J. Matthews notched a fourth point for the leaders. McEwen had appealed for hands near goal, Robertson being the offender, but the referee awarded the free kick to the other side, a singular decision under the circumstances. These repeated successes were rapturously hailed by the visitors, and things were now regarded as the reverse of promising for the homesters, who appreciably slackened their efforts for a space—a mistake which was extremely regrettable. A foul against the "dockers" led to Luton sending over the line, and then the homesters seemed to arouse from their lethargy, Galbraith setting them a worthy example. Twice in as many minutes was the visitors' citadel bombarded, and the attack was only suspended by Luton being punished for fouling—a most unlucky circumstance. The cessation was of the briefest, however, and Prentice signalled the resumption of the siege by sending in a splendid shot which missed by inches. Galbraith made what was certainly the best attempt of the day, Walker having all his work cut out to clear, and then Finlayson created unbounded delight by sending into the net. With one less to make up the Luton sympathisers became more hopeful, and as if in response to their thoughts the "reds" redoubled their efforts. More than once the Millwall fortress had narrow escapes, and at length Gallacher improved upon a pass by Prentice to Galbraith by sending past Walker. From this stage to the finish Luton pressed continuously and they had all the best of matters, but they failed to draw level, and when the end came the score was :

Millwall, four ; Luton, three.

To say that the result was disappointing is to express the prevalent idea very mildly. There was a very pronounced feeling regarding the referee, many of whose decisions failed to elicit approval. All that need be added is that the winners had to try all they knew, and that they had all the best of the luck. They will have to struggle quite as hard when Luton visit Millwall, for despite the vigour which they imparted to their display the Lutonians were their equals, if not their superiors, in point of science and trickiness.