

THE SOUTHERN LEAGUE

LUTON TOWN v. SOUTHAMPTON ST. MARY'S.

Played at Southampton, on Saturday. Result:—

Luton Town	2 goals.
Southampton St. Mary's	1 goal.

The teams were as follow:—

RIGHT.	LUTON TOWN.	LEFT.
	Bee (goal).	
Chester.		McEwen.
Watkins.	M'Crindle.	Howe.
Gallscher.	Galbraith.	Prentice.
		Jack.
Hollands.	Ward.	Offer.
Nineham.		Baker.
Thomson.	Littlehales.	Taylor.
Jeffrey.		Marshall.
	Williamson (goal).	
LEFT.	SOUTHAMPTON ST. MARY'S.	RIGHT.
Referee, Mr. S. R. Carr.		

To the general body of my readers I wish "A Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year," and to the Luton football team in particular, "A Quiet Christmas and a Victorious Career." In making the distinction, however, please do not think I mean to imply that everybody should go on the spree except the players, and that they alone should keep sober.

The unfortunate thing is that, even in these days, a great many people labour under the impression that merriment is only to be obtained by an unlimited indulgence in drink. This is especially the case at this season, when everybody seems anxious to treat everybody else.

Now merriment of this kind is disastrous to a football career, and therefore I hope that every member of the Luton team will most religiously eschew it. I believe they will, in spite of the numerous temptations which are sure to be placed in their way by well-meaning but foolish people.

In support of my contention that a man may be jolly without getting tight, I need only mention the fact that the merriest man among the Reds is a teetotaller. Who is he? It doesn't want two guesses.

But pray don't think I am lecturing the players on account of any disposition on their part to stray from the proper path. If you were to search England through, I don't believe you would find a professional team, the members of which have a keener interest in the game, and are more desirous of keeping themselves in such a fit condition as to enable them to put forth their very best efforts to win.

A glance at the record printed at the head of this column will show that Luton, notwithstanding many drawbacks, have had a singularly successful career so far this season, having won no less than 19 matches out of 25 played. Such an eminently satisfactory result could not have been accomplished without strict attention to training, and it is alike creditable to players, trainers, and committee.

And while I hope the players will practice abstemiousness at this particular period, I cannot wish anything better for my readers generally, for the man who raises his spirits on spirits, with the idea of spending a merry Xmas, very seldom indeed experiences a "Happy New Year."

Now I have got through my temperance lecture, which is something of an annual event, I will get on to the subject about which you are all anxious to hear. Of course I refer to the Southampton match.

The Reds left Luton on Friday afternoon, under the paternal care of the man who holds the money bags, Treasurer Shane to wit. They journeyed in a saloon carriage to St. Pancras, but on the South-Western line, from Waterloo to Southampton, no saloon was provided.

However, three compartments were reserved for them, and it was hoped that they would make a very comfortable journey, with plenty of elbow room. But your true footballer despises comfort when it has to be obtained by dispensing with the society of his fellows, and so it came about that when the party left Waterloo, pretty well the whole lot of them were crowded into one compartment.

Marshall headed away. A foul against Littlehales was followed by one against Watkins, who apparently wished to equalise in this matter, and then Howe emulated, thus giving Luton an undesirable lead. The free kicks were unproductive.

The play was already fast and exciting, but even with the wind against them, the Reds were having the best of the exchanges. Then the Saints' right wing got in evidence, and a centre by Baker, succeeded by a foul against Galbraith, jeopardised the Luton goal, but at length Chesham cleared splendidly.

Finlayson was next responsible for a good dribble, but clung to the ball too long, and was robbed by Thomson. After another foul against Littlehales, Luton again assumed the aggressive, and from a centre by Jack, Gallacher would almost certainly have scored had not the former been given offside.

The homesters made a vigorous response, and Nineham got in a lovely shot at the Luton citadel, which Bee just managed to save. As the ball only dropped at his feet, however, after he had handled it, things looked bad, but the leather was scrimmaged behind, and a couple of corners ensued, Baker taking the kicks, and at the second attempt hitting the bar, but M'Crindle, Finlayson, and Galbraith between them effected a clearance.

The locals were now putting in a lot of work, and from a centre by Baker, Ward just missed the target, while a little later the first-named player again became dangerous but was ruled offside. Hands against Gallacher enabled Thomson to place the ball in the net, but as it was not touched in the transit there was no score.

Another opportunity, not improved upon, was furnished the locals by a foul against M'Crindle, and then Luton worked their way up the field by means of some very pretty passing, for which they were generously applauded. Gallacher made a splendid attempt at goal, but the wind carried the ball wide.

As a result of the combined efforts of Prentice and Jack, Gallacher received and sent in a shot which Williamson saved, and another centre from the same quarter gave the homesters a little trouble, but they effected a clearance.

Then there was a race down the field, and a desperate struggle in front of the Luton goal, but the Reds, fighting for all they were worth, succeeded in beating off their assailants. From a foul against Howe, the Saints once more netted the ball, the progress of which however, had neither been impeded nor accelerated, and then, following a foul against Taylor, Luton had rather hard luck in not scoring.

The play continued to be of a give-and-take character for some time, with the Saints having rather the best of it, but as time went on it began to look as though there would be no score in the first half, and the few Lutonians present were of course greatly elated. But a few minutes before the interval, Nineham came very near doing the trick, and then three minutes from lemon-time, Holland put in a grand centre, there was a brief scrimmage, and Baker put the ball through.

So the teams crossed over with the locals leading by a goal to nil, certainly not a very formidable score considering the advantages they had enjoyed. The defence opposed to them, however, had been very strong, and the way in which the little McEwen had stopped the big Baker, when the latter was doing his rushes down hill, was particularly noticeable.

Had I not seen the Middlesbrough match, I should now have expected the Reds to romp round their opponents, but that game had taught me how much battling against a strong wind takes it out of a team. On that occasion, they had scarcely a kick left in them when they changed ends, and as I expected now, the efforts put forth by Luton in the first half, spoiled their play considerably in the second.

The Saints, of course, were comparatively fresh when the play was re-commenced, whereas the Reds were anything but that. The consequence was that they were not able to do themselves justice, and scarcely at any time in the last forty-five minutes did they show their real form.

Immediately the ball was set in motion, Jack got away and centred, but Galbraith was too much hampered to shoot, and Gallacher receiving, put behind. A good centre by the right winger was not taken advantage of, but directly after, Williamson had to save from a smart shot by Prentice, and M'Crindle sent over.

Hands subsequently relieved pressure, and Nineham got away in pretty fashion, finishing up with a grand low shot which Bee admirably negotiated. Then Luton again menaced the Southampton goal, and after a brief struggle, Finlayson just gave the ball a touch, but it was sufficient, for as Williamson was in the act of picking up the leather, Galbraith charged him off, and it rolled slowly into the net.

Thus the scores were made equal. No sooner had the team started from the halfway line, than Luton returned to the attack, and Galbraith, receiving from a pass by Finlayson, took a flying shot, the ball going in the net like a bolt from the blue. It was splendidly done, and it won the match.

Directly after Galbraith was badly fouled by Littlehales, and McEwen, undertaking the kick, hit the cross-bar, the ball dropping down and rolling through. Luton appealed for a goal, but it was not allowed, and I think Mr. Carr was right, for though watching very closely, I did not see the ball touch anybody.

Southampton was reached at eight o'clock, or thereabouts, and an adjournment was immediately made to Flower's Temperance Hotel, quite an imposing building, where accommodation was found for the night. But sleep is sometimes denied to footballers as well as to kings, and though they went to bed they could not sleep.

The wind was boisterous, and so were they. In fact it was Middlesbrough over again. A perfect gale raged all night, and made sleep impossible. But fortunately there was not quite such a hurricane the next day as was the case in the memorable Cup-tie.

The party which went from Luton to Southampton on Saturday morning to witness the encounter was more select than numerous, not numbering over half-a-dozen, and "Lutonian" was the only Pressman bold enough to undertake the trip.

The match took place on the Antelope ground, which under ordinary conditions is not a bad one, but on Saturday, owing to the heavy rains which had fallen, it was a veritable bog. The players slid about in all directions, leaving marks in many cases a couple of inches deep.

I was given to understand that since the Millwall match, when the Saints made a draw with the Dockers, nothing else but the impending visit of Luton had been talked about in local football circles, and it was confidently hoped that the Southampton team would make full atonement for their bad defeat at Strawopolis.

There was very little doubt in the minds of the local enthusiasts that the Saints, having drawn with the Dockers, would be able to take a couple of points out of Luton, and the crowd which assembled to see them do it, attained very large proportions. The Saints had, indeed, proved themselves almost invincible on their own ground.

The kick-off was fixed for 2.15, but long before that time, the folks began to flock to the rendezvous, and when the game was in progress I should think there were nearer six than five thousand persons present. And what an admirable crowd it was, too!

I have been waiting very anxiously to find a crowd which will compare favourably with that at Luton as regards behaviour, but have met with disappointment all along the line. At Reading, the spectators kick up a rare old shine, at Wolverton, though less in number, they are as bad proportionately, and in the immediate neighbourhood of London the crowds are abominably unfair in their conduct.

I must confess that I expected to fall in with the same sort of thing at Southampton, and when I saw the multitude of people, began to look out for squalls. Marvellous to relate, however, there was nothing of the sort, and beyond an occasional outburst when a foul was given, there was no sort of hostile demonstration whatever. Good play on both sides—and there was plenty of it—was applauded with almost equal impartiality. I say "almost," because absolute perfection in this respect is an ideal naturally impossible of attainment.

As already indicated, up to Saturday last I had flattered myself that the Luton crowd, despite the sneers of certain irresponsible scribblers, deserved credit above all others for its sportsmanlike qualities, but, honestly speaking, I must say that if we do not actually yield the palm to Southampton, we can only claim to be on a par with them. I tender my hearty congratulations to the Southampton crowd.

It is a thousand times better that things should be this way, for what in the world is the good of spectators making a lot of cantankerous remarks about visiting teams, to say nothing of hooting and booing one set of men for precisely the points applauded in the other set. But it is the undesirable which generally prevails.

While we were waiting for the appearance of the teams on Saturday, I was somewhat interested in the observations made by those around me. A gentleman, referring to the proceedings of the previous week, said to another, "That was the referee last Saturday—Bourke; he's a fine chap," and this was typical of many other opinions expressed, for it seemed to be generally agreed that Mr. Roston Bourke was the best referee Southampton had seen.

Then Galbraith's fame seemed to have penetrated these regions, for one onlooker asked, "Where does Galbraith play?" and the answer vouchsafed was, "Centre forward, and he's a splendid fellow too, so I have heard." They also appeared to have some knowledge of Prentice and the Ordnance affair, for when—wonder of wonders!—foul after foul was given against Howe, it was all put down to Prentice's account.

An outburst of cheering signalled the appearance on the ground of the Saints, and the cheering was repeated a moment later when the Reds followed. Mr. Carr, looking as usual contented with himself and all the world, was already on the scene, resplendent in the gayest of gay coats and with cap to match.

The home team won the toss, and elected to kick downhill, with the additional advantage of a strong wind behind them. This looked rather ominous for Luton and almost pointed to a repetition of Middlesbrough, the like of which I never wish to see again.

It was encouraging, however, to find that Luton were the first to attack, and Watkins put in a beauty, which

I don't know that any good is to be gained by giving the details of the rest of the game, for no other points were scored, though both sides made spirited attempts. Once Jack put in a grand shot, the ball just grazing the crossbar, but Taylor came nearest scoring for Luton. It happened thusly. Cheshier took a mighty kick, and Taylor went to clear, but the ball screwed off his foot into goal, where Williamson brought off a fine save.

Although in this half, Luton overshadowed their opponents, it must in all fairness be admitted that the latter played up with wonderful spirit, and many of their rushes were of a very dangerous character, taxing the Luton defence severely.

No one seeing the match on Saturday would think the Southampton team was the same, or pretty well the same, as that which performed at Luton. Their play was as different as chalk from cheese. They were better and stronger in all respects—individually and in combination.

When the Saints were at Luton, I thought very little of them, but I am now perfectly willing to concede that they are a team which take a lot of knocking out. Still, with the ground in good condition and the weather favourable, I think that Luton would beat them five times out of six, as the Reds are considerably their superiors in their knowledge of the science of the game.

Towards the end of the second half on Saturday, an incident occurred which was of a very trifling nature, but which nevertheless showed excellent feeling all round. Taylor had something the matter with his leg—cramp, I suppose—and McEwen at once set to work rubbing vigorously, until the limb was brought round to its normal condition. The circumstance was loudly applauded by the spectators, who did themselves honour in thus encouraging good feeling. The efforts of onlookers in some other parts of the country are too often directed the other way.

Saturday's game was not a great one, for though there were occasional glimpses of good combination, the play for the most part was of a somewhat scrambling nature. This was due to a great extent to the strong wind prevailing, but in some measure, no doubt, to the great importance of the contest, as deciding the position which the Clubs shall occupy in the League table.

Had Luton lost this match, their prospects in the competition would not have been particularly rosy, whereas now the second place is quite open to them, and—thanks to the good fight made by Reading against the Dockers—the first is not impossible of attainment.

Criticising the individual players, I am pleased to say that Bee gave a very good performance. He had more work than has been the case for some time, and he did it very well indeed. The backs again were in the best of form, their play in the first half especially being deserving of the highest praise. McEwen and t'other one both did grandly.

As regards the halves, for once in a way I have no difficulty in picking out the best man, M'Crindle showing up splendidly. Watkins was hardly so good as usual, and Howe was dead off, the wind and the heavy ground together quite taking all the steam out of him. Those fouls were a mystery to me. I think he had three given against him—nearly three times as many as all the rest of the season had placed to his credit.

Of the forwards, Prentice perhaps shone most, putting in plenty of first-rate work. Galbraith did well, though not quite so well as usual, and Finlayson and Gallacher also performed very creditably, but the latter did not get in any of his brilliant shots. Jack gave a very fair exhibition, but was a trifle slow.

As to the opposing team, credit is the more easily given because I presume they were playing to the full extent of their powers. Nineham, who took the place of Angus, was certainly not the least effective forward, and he and Hollands worked together very finely, the outside left putting in some capital centres and otherwise displaying his capabilities.

Ward was a very fair centre, but in the second half, he got lamed and afterwards changed places with Baker, who during the first forty-five minutes had distinguished himself by some powerful rushes down hill. Offer was in grand form; in fact, I have never seen him give a better display.

The half-backs were very strong—stronger than our own on the day's play. Littlehales proved himself a very able tackler, and did wonders for his sides, and Taylor, the amateur, is a thoroughly capable man, but not much in advance of Thomson, who did yeoman service for the Saints.

Marshall and Jeffrey were a splendid pair of backs, and did great things, and Williamson, the new goal-keeper, who hails from Ardwick, seems to add considerably to the strength of the Southampton team. But the eleven, good as it is, is not anything like as good as it ought to be, considering the "gates" obtainable in that quarter of the globe.

The Lutonians commenced their journey home at a quarter-past six, but the progress made was not very rapid. In reaching Winchester, a distance of twelve miles, something like an hour and a half was occupied, and it was not until about two minutes to ten that the train, with its precious freight, arrived at Waterloo. And then some Lutonians caught the 10.20 from St. Pancras, but how they managed it I dare not say.

In the other Southern League matches on Saturday,

the chief one had a very satisfactory termination to Luton. I refer to that between Millwall and Reading at the latter place. The Dockers, with the wind behind them, only scored once, and Reading equalising, the game finished in a draw at one goal all. Ilford and Ordnance also made a draw, nothing being scored on either side, but at Swindon, Chatham beat the home team by two goals to nil.

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If Luton should beat Millwall next month, as bar accidents, I believe is not only possible but probable, the two Clubs will be on an equality as regards points. But how happy we should be now if it had not been for that wretched Ordnance affair.

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It was with the most sincere regret that I learned that Julian had the misfortune on Saturday to break his collar-bone. This, I believe, is the first accident that he has met with on the football field. Poor old Ju, it will not be a very merry Christmas for him.

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The Hotspur were playing London Welsh in the Amateur Cup competition, and the result was a draw of one goal each. The day was a disastrous one for the Tottenham people, as in addition to losing Julian they had their grand stand blown down. Many matches in various parts of the country were not played owing to the gale, and several stands were wrecked.

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The Luton programme for the Christmas holidays is a somewhat ambitious one, as will be seen from the following list: — Monday, Wrexham, first team. Christmay Day, Formby, 11.30, reserves. Wednesday, Kettering Reserves, 11.30, Darwen, 2.15; full team out against the latter club. Thursday, Excelsiors, 11, reserves; Casuals, 2.15, first team. Saturday, at Watford, v. West Herts.

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The boys of the Luton Schoolboys' League meet the Woolwich Arsenal boys at Woolwich on Boxing Day. The South London League team are coming to Luton on December 31st. They are undefeated this season, their record being: played 5, won 5, goals for 36, against 4. Their matches have been, v. Marylebone, away, 13 to 1; v. West London, away, 5 to 0; v. Marylebone, home, 10 to 0; v. Croydon, away, 5 to 1; v. Manchester, at Oval, 3 to 2.

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Thus the *Morning*: "Mr. A. Roston Bourke, the hon. sec. of the Referees' Association, is known to have very friendly relations with Luton Town. I am informed on very good authority that Millwall earnestly requested the management committee of the Southern League to appoint Mr. Bourke for this match.

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"In so doing Millwall are showing very fine feeling, for Luton were by no means delighted that the principal witnesses against them with regard to the dispute over the lost match were officials and members of the Millwall Athletic. This appointment, however, shows Millwall's confidence in the integrity and impartiality of Mr. Bourke; Millwall's desire to bury the hatchet and to create better feelings between the two clubs, and Millwall's wish to restore harmony among the various clubs of the Southern League. There is little doubt the Millwall-Nat Whittaker-Luton business was the cause of many little misunderstandings and distrust among the other clubs."

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WHERE TO SHOOT! Straight into S. Bassett's, 28, Wellington-street, and get one of his first-class overcoats to measure for 30s. Acme of perfection.—[ADVT].

LUTONIAN.