

THE SOUTHERN LEAGUE.

LUTON TOWN v. MILLWALL ATHLETIC.

Played at Millwall on Saturday. Result:

Luton Town..... 2 goals.

Millwall Athletic..... 2 goals.

The teams were as follow:—

RIGHT. LUTON TOWN. LEFT.

J. Dickerson (goal).

Cheaser.

McEwen.

Collins.

McCrindle.

Howe.

Gallacher. Finlayson.

Galbraith.

Prentice.

Jack.



Geddes. McKenzie.

Robertson.

Wilson.

Jones.

H. Matthews.

J. Matthews.

King.

Davis.

Graham.

Gibson (goal).

LEFT. MILLWALL ATHLETIC. RIGHT.

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Referee, Mr. A. R. Bourke; linesmen, Messrs. H. Arnold (Luton) and Kidd (Millwall).

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I'm in a fix. The fact is I don't know whether rejoice or lament, to be happy or miserable. It's awkward when you feel like that. Some people are pretty often in this predicament, but I have no experience for me, and I don't quite know how to take it.

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Of course, on paper a draw or the much-prized, far-fetched their own ground with Millwallites looks right, and greatly-petted who saw the play enough, but then those of us winners, we know who ought to have been the the last minute who were the winners right up to morally speaking of the game, and indeed we know who, being, were the actual winners.

I was sure Luton who ought to have won, it was Luton who were generally credited with victory until thirty seconds from the finish, and it was Luton who really and truly did win. Why do I make this latter assertion? Simply because Millwall's first goal ought not to have counted.

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Don't think I am going to grumble about it, however, or that I am going to blame the referee. A referee can't see everything, and Mr. Bourke is not to be jumped on because he did not see Geddes deliberately fist the ball before putting in the centre which led to the goal.

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The unfortunate thing was that the Luton players saw it and perceptibly slackened their efforts in expectation of the free kick. And when it did come it was too late to recover the lost ground. I groaned inwardly. It's a very wise plan to do that when you are in the middle of a hostile crowd.

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Some other people on the stand—I don't know whether there were Lutonians involved—during the earlier portion of the proceedings did not display the same wisdom as I did in this instance; they gave audible expression to their feelings, and the result was a brief but exciting scrimmage, in the course of which some very straight shooting was shown.

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There are many ways of enjoying one's self, but I should think one of the least satisfactory is that of exchanging blows with another fellow. Still, there's no accounting for tastes. It's a department of science, however, in which one may be pardoned for assuming that it is considerably more blessed to give than to receive.

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Taking the Millwall crowd as a whole, I think they may fairly be complimented upon their Saturday's display. There was very little rowdyism and very little unfairness. As a matter of fact, many good words were spoken for Luton, who as a rule were credited with being the better team.

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There were three or four hundred Lutonians on the ground, and though they necessarily formed but a small portion of the four or five thousand spectators, they nevertheless made their voices heard when occasion required. That is, they gave the Reds to understand that they wanted them to play up.

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Now up to the time that I knew Nicholson and Watkins would be available for this match, I had regarded it as a certainty for Luton. Ever since we first met the Dockers this season, I have regarded the Reds at their full strength as by far the better team.

But with the knowledge of the weakness caused by the inability of the two gentlemen named to take part in the proceedings, and with the remembrance of that terrible Ilford affair still haunting me, doubts arose in my mind as to whether after all Luton would be able to hold their own.

As it turned out, however, my fears were not realised, for at no time during Saturday's game did Millwall show any superiority. On the contrary, their play was of a very poor description compared with Luton's, the ragged kicking of the Athletic forwards contrasting strongly with the finished passing of the Luton quintet.

In the first half, the Reds had a long, long way the best of matters, but the spectators flattered themselves that it was all on account of the wind. Indeed, I heard it whispered that the Dockers were reserving themselves for the second moiety. But those who laid the flattering unction to their souls in this way were bitterly disappointed, for again Luton proved themselves the better players.

The match was fixed to begin at half-past two, and shortly before that time, Mr. Roston Bourke, accompanied by "the popular Nat," went on a tour of inspection round the ground, the result of his investigations being that it was decided to make it a League game.

Personally, I do not think the ground was fit. On the outsides, which were entirely unprotected, the turf was very hard and lumpy, but in the centre tan had been laid down. This, however, formed but a thin covering to the ashes beneath, and when the players came a cropper they didn't get up in a hurry.

I had almost forgotten a very important item. The Red Cross Band, having obtained permission from the Millwall authorities, were early on the ground and discoursed sweet music to a remarkably appreciative audience. If the people were as liberal with their coppers as they were with their applause, the Band must have benefited considerably. The new instruments looked very fine.

Punctually to time, or perhaps a minute before the half-hour, the teams lined up, and Mr. Bourke gave the signal for the commencement of hostilities. Luton won the toss, and took advantage of a fairly strong wind, a choice which does not fall to their lot as often as could be desired.

The start was a very inauspicious one for the Reds, as McEwen almost immediately gave a corner. Geddes placed and J. Matthews sent over the bar. Luton responded on the left, but Graham, after nearly making a mull of it, just managed to rob Jack, and a clearance was effected.

A foul against M'Crindle did not benefit the Dockers, for a capital pass from Galbraith enabled Gallacher to get away, and a corner resulted. This was beautifully placed by Jack, and another corner ensued. Collins undertook this, and a fierce scrimmage followed upon his kick, but ultimately the leather went over instead of under the bar.

The Dockers conceded still another corner to a good centre by Jack, and the latter again judged his kick to a nicety, but once more the homesters cleared. Chesher returned, and a spirited tussle followed, from which the Dockers emerged triumphant, but a moment later Prentice got in a hot shot, but not too hot for Gibson.

Then Graham partially remedied a sad bit of bungling by giving a fourth corner, but though well placed by Jack, the Dockers cleared, and this time made tracks for the Luton goal, which was not endangered, however, owing to a free kick being awarded Luton in consequence of Chesher being badly fouled by Geddes.

The Reds resuming their aggressive tactics, Galbraith passed out to Gallacher, who put in a hot shot the wrong side of the net, but the goal kick afforded the Dockers little relief, yet another corner being the outcome of a grand centre by Jack.

The outside left undertook the kick, and placing almost under the cross-bar, Finlayson put on the finishing touch, after Gibson had made an unsuccessful effort to save. The Reds were enthusiastically cheered by the Lutonians present as they returned to the half-way line, and the spectators generally were beginning to entertain a better opinion of them.

The next incident was a smart run and a good centre by Jones, and Dickerson clearing, McEwen considerably gave the Luton custodian a further opportunity of distinguishing himself, directing into goal a shot from Wilson. Dickerson was equal to the occasion.

The ball was now rapidly transferred from one end of the field to the other, but after a bit, a miskick by Dickerson nearly enabled the Dockers to equalise. The Luton custodian ran out to clear from Geddes, and the ball screwed off his foot and would have gone into goal, but for the timely interposition of McEwen, who averted the danger with a big kick.

A couple of fouls against Luton—one being against Prentice for exactly the same offence as that which proved so expensive a luxury at Ilford—did not enable the Dockers to make much headway, and Luton renewing the attack, Gibson had to save from both Prentice and M'Crindle.

A run by Geddes was spoiled by Chesher, and when the famous left-winger got a second opportunity, he neutralised by shooting high over the bar. Soon

afterwards Collins judged a free kick for Luton very nicely, and Gibson experienced considerable difficulty in negotiating the shot put in by Gallacher.

The play for some time continued in Luton's favour, Galbraith leading the attacks with rare dash, but at last Millwall came in for an extraordinary slice of good luck. Geddes, in going for the ball, found he was just missing and therefore gave it a deliberate punch. Luton appealed, but their appeal was not allowed, and Geddes put in a big centre. Dickerson ran out to meet it, but the ball bounced over his head, and to me it seemed to go on the net, I am told, however, that it hit the bar.

But wherever it went it came back into play and was rushed through, amid the enthusiastic cheers of the spectators. It was about as lucky a goal as it has ever been my lot to see, and I could not bring myself to believe that it was allowed until I saw the players returning to the halfway line.

The rest of the play up to half-time produced nothing worth chronicling, and the teams crossed over with the score at one goal each. It should be stated that ten minutes or a quarter of an hour before the interval, McKenzie had to leave the field, but he came on lively enough when the other players returned, and looked well pleased with the reception accorded him.

The play in the first half had been so greatly in favour of Luton, that the wind had come in for a great deal more than its fair share of the credit, and now that the Dockers were going to have it in their favour, a victory for them was pretty considerably anticipated.

From the character of the play during the first few minutes, it seemed that expectation was likely to be realised, as after McEwen had cleared splendidly from an overhead kick by Geddes, the Dockers swarmed to the attack again, and the ball was kept bobbing about in very unpleasant proximity to the Luton goal.

At last, however, Jack got away, and this turned the tide of battle, Luton subsequently more than maintaining their ground, but Jack's centre was not improved upon, but directly after, Galbraith receiving from Prentice a fine bit of work, the result being that he afforded a grand opening. But, alas, he was too anxious, and shot high over the bar.

A constant succession of fouls now somewhat marred the character of the play, but these did not, as seemed to be assumed by the writer in a London paper, indicate any bad feeling on the part of the combatants. Most of them were mere technical breaches of the rules, and intentional and bad fouls were few and far between.

Luton did most of the attacking, but Millwall came nearest scoring, a grand shot by McKenzie hitting the cross-bar a spanker. Chesher, however, cleared finely, and then the Luton forwards exhibited a little of their best combination, their form quite astonishing the spectators.

The efforts of the Reds were frustrated for a time, but at last Gallacher, receiving from a splendid pass by the Luton centre forward, got round Davis, and scored with a beauty, the ball curling in at the corner of the goal, and Gibson failing in a rather weak attempt to save.

This circumstance did more than anything else to elicit the fact that there were some Lutonians on the ground, the cheering being immense. It was generally regarded as the winning point, and the play following appeared to justify the assumption, Luton continuing to have the best of matters.

Prentice now dropped back a bit, and put in some splendid defensive work, his heading being marvellous. I am not exaggerating when I say that he headed the ball when many a man a foot taller would have failed to touch it.

Free kicks again became rather frequent, and one taken by J. Matthews gave Dickerson an opportunity of showing his ability. The shot was a hot 'un, and Dickerson was surrounded by friends and foes, but he caught the ball and walked through the lot of them, clearing splendidly with a drop kick.

A moment later another and similar shot was put in, and the Luton goal-keeper saved in exactly the same way, a feat for which he was loudly applauded. We were now all anticipating the call of time, and hundreds of people left the field, believing that Luton had secured the victory.

But all through the League competition, Millwall have been as lucky as Luton have been unlucky, and perhaps it was only in the natural order of things that the very last kick in the match should have been the means of equalising the scores.

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The kick was made by Jones, and it was a clever shot, finishing up a clever bit of work, Dickerson having no chance of saving. The second half had extended over forty-eight minutes, time having been deducted in consequence of play having had to be suspended several times on account of players being hurt.

It was terribly disappointing to Luton to be thus robbed of victory at the very last moment, but the joy it afforded the Millwall players was unbounded, some of them turning head over heels in the intensity of their delight.

But there was one satisfaction about it, at any rate, and that was that the Reds had at last redeemed themselves in the eyes of a London crowd. The Millwall supporters could not help admitting that Luton were the better team, and even the Millwall officials came to the same conclusion.

It must of course be remembered that whilst the Dockers were playing their full strength, Luton were really two men short. I think therefore that the result fully justifies the opinion I have expressed all along, that Luton are a better lot than their rivals.

The contrast is most marked among the forwards. The Millwall players have always depended a great deal too much upon Geddes and McKenzie, and there is no doubt that those two players do generally shine. But the Luton front string is now very evenly balanced, and therein lies all the difference.

On Saturday the famous left wingers completely failed to distinguish themselves, and possibly this should be taken as an excellent testimonial for Collins and Chesher. By comparison with the Luton left-wing, Geddes and McKenzie were simply not in it.

Robertson was a very poor centre; in fact I scarcely set eyes upon him during the whole of the match. Jones and Wilson were better, and tried hard all the way through, though as a rule they found McEwen a little more than they could manage.

The half-backs showed considerable smartness, but the backs hardly came up to reputation, Graham making a good many miskicks. Davis was the better man of the two. Gibson in goal acquitted himself well, and was a vast improvement on the custodian the Dockers brought to Luton.

As already intimated, the Luton forwards played a wonderfully fine game, bearing in mind the state of the ground. Galbraith passed out to his comrades in beautiful style, and both wings were in capital going order. The cohesion shown by the front string was the feature of the match.

So struck were the spectators by the contrast between the two sets of forwards, that many of them could only account for the superiority of Luton by the supposition that their boots had been better prepared for the slippery surface. Had these persons seen the Reds oftener they would have been a little wiser.

Jack, I am glad to notice, continues to improve in speed, and on Saturday's form was a more effective man than Geddes. Prentice was in high feather, and both Gallacher and Finlayson rendered splendid service.

M'Crindle was the best of the half-backs, Howe evidently finding the ground not much to his liking. Collins, though lacking the smartness of Watkins, nevertheless performed remarkably well, especially considering it was his first game in the position.

Chesher likewise at back gave an excellent account of himself, and as for McEwen—well, he was undoubtedly far and away the best back on the field. Dickerson's operations between the sticks were watched with more than usual interest. To substitute him for Bee in so important a match was a risky experiment on the part of the committee, but it was justified by the event, for I question very much whether Bee would have been as safe. But if Dickerson is to be given a place in the chief fixtures, I think his services ought to be utilised as often as possible. I don't like changes.

The result of Saturday's match should give us some encouragement for the Preston North End game. Of course, there is a big gap between Millwall and Preston, but still the Luton men are capable of a much better display than they gave on Saturday even, and with strict attention to training they may make things very warm for the North Enders.

Unfortunately, there are some fools about. Some of these were very anxious to treat one of the Luton players to sundry drinks on Friday night last, but the player very wisely declined. It cannot be too widely recognised that the man who seeks to show his friendship in this way on the eve of an important match, is nothing but an enemy in disguise, and even after the match he might choose some better way of testifying to his goodwill.

"Rover," of the *Morning Leader*, went to Millwall on Saturday, and he seems to have been highly pleased with the Luton team. He singled out Galbraith and McEwen for special praise, and said things which must have made those worthies blush. But there is one thing, they deserved it.

The other matches in the Southern League resulted pretty much in accordance with anticipation. At the Spotted Dog, Southampton St. Mary's beat Clapton by three goals to one, and at Reading the home team overcame Chatham by two to one. The Swindon v. Ilford fixture was declared off on account of the frost.

Have you paid S. Bassett's Establishment a visit? If not, hurry up, all his goods are New and of the Latest Style, and prices charged are on the co-operative system. Tailoring up to date.—28, Wellington-street, Luton.—[ADVT.]

The Luton Reserves did a good thing on Saturday by beating the Millwallians by three goals to love, on the Town Ground, while the first team was away at Millwall. This is about their best performance of the season, although they have before been responsible for some excellent games.

The following were the sides:—Luton Reserves: Bee, goal; Street and Read, backs; Bird, Simpkins, and Taylor, half-backs; Brown and Read (right), Groom (centre), Allen and Dimmock (left), forwards. Millwall Reserves: Walker, goal; Broughton and