

FOOTBALL.

LUTON AND THE LEAGUE.

A DRAW WITH CLAPTON.

After more than one postponement Luton met Clapton on Saturday in their re-played Southern League fixture. It will be remembered that when the teams met on November 10 the exceedingly late start led to a suspension of operations becoming necessary before full time had been played, rain and darkness leading to this result. Luton were leading at that time by four goals to one, and were having all the best of the play. At one time it was arranged to decide the game on a week-day; but frost prevented that, and a re-arrangement of the Luton card rendered it possible for a Saturday to be devoted to the encounter. The Lutonians accordingly journeyed to Forest Gate on Saturday; they travelled by the 10.43 Midland train, and were at their destination long before the hour announced for the start. The match was evidently regarded with considerable interest in London, for upwards of 2,000 spectators were present. The travellers from Strawopolis had been confronted with a pea-soup fog on arriving in London, and this gave place to a white mist which enshrouded the ground at the "Spotted Dog." The Clapton men were not ready at the time fixed for the start to take place, and for some minutes they played a man short, the referee declining to wait.

It was a few minutes late when the rivals appeared as follows:—

Luton Town: Goal, E. Bee; backs, A. Collins and J. McEwen; half-backs, J. Watkins, R. McCrindle (capt.) and A. Howe; forwards, W. Gallacher and J. Finlayson (right), H. Galbraith (centre), W. Prentice and J. Jack (left).

Clapton: Goal, H. Earle; backs, H. J. Cook and J. W. Dodds; half-backs, J. W. Welham, A. R. Mayes, and A. Pursey; forwards, Tillett and H. V. Hewett (right), R. J. Sheldrake (centre), F. W. Hughes and A. G. Milton (left).

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Losing the toss, the visitors kicked off, and in less than a minute a lovely centre by Gallacher gave Jack a chance close to the uprights; but the outside left unaccountably missed, and the leather rolled harmlessly over the goal-line. Clapton broke away, though McEwen was too pronounced a stumbling-block, and "Mac" was generously cheered for a fine display of defence. Welham evoked delighted plaudits for his clever tackling, Gallacher being the victim; but the nimble right-winger managed five times out of six to get away with the ball. Pursey conceded a corner, and from this Earle was presented with his first opportunity of distinguishing himself, which he did by clearing in very skilful fashion. Hewett got away well; but "Mac" was also thereabouts, and it is scarcely necessary, perhaps, to add that H. V.'s progress was effectually stayed. The "reds" retaliated by attacking, and Welham gave a further sample of his weight utilisation. Prentice was badly thrown by one of the half-backs, and, following the resultant free kick, Gallacher shot out. Hands against Milton was duly taken cognisance of by the gallant lieutenant in charge, and subsequently Dodds robbed Finlayson very smartly. At this stage Mayes, who had been the absentee, came on. Following hands against the home combination McEwen sent high over the goal, an achievement which was hailed with derisive applause from a section of the crowd. That the whole of the spectators were not Clapton partizans was, however, rendered apparent by the frequently reiterated cries of "Play up, Luton." Hands against Howe afforded Welham an opening, and the burly Tottenham Hotspur man sent behind very tamely. When Earle had surprised everybody with another fine sample of first-class goal keeping, Finlayson was punished for fouling. Jack appeared to many observers to succeed in forcing a corner; but Mr. Chase evidently thought differently, for he awarded a goal-kick to the home contingent. A determined onslaught by the visitors led to Earle clearing once more in admirable style. An amusing passage here occurred. One of the Clapton men collided with Finlayson, and when the whistle blew cries arose of "Turn him off"—the crowd apparently imagining that the referee was about to penalise the stranger. It was the Clapton man, however, who received the punishment, and in places where dead silence did not fall round the ropes were to be heard sounds of laughter at the chagrin of the mistaken ones. A foul against McCrindle was productive of the usual penalty, and just after Galbraith made a capital dodging run for which he was deservedly cheered. He finished by shooting prettily, though unfortunately without the desired effect, Earle once more being at home. A foul against Hughes on Finlayson enabled Watkins to send in a stinger, which Earle managed to tip over the bar, this leading to another unproductive corner for the "reds." An extremely neat overhead attempt by Prentice deserved better luck than that which it received, Earle having all his work cut out to clear it. Welham was immediately afterwards guilty of an offense for which he was necessarily punished. Galbraith jumped at him and he seized the centre man and throw him over his head. Following the free kick Gallacher shot splendidly, only to see Earle save as imperturbably as ever. Hands against Galbraith did not stave off the Luton attack very long; the men were soon lingering round the home fortress, and a hot one from Prentice gave the custodian considerable trouble. Hands against Hughes was succeeded by a corner to Luton; this was excellently placed, and Gallacher sent over the line when Earle had kept the leather out once. Another corner to the "reds" was nugatory, and then at the other end a free kick was given against Luton for fouling. Mayes took the kick and landed the ball in the net; but no score followed, no second player having touched the ball. Hewett and his companion made a useful run along the wing and McEwen only stopped them with difficulty. Watkins gave away a corner in heading behind, and from this the ball was sent past Bee, Hughes being the last to touch it. The enthusiasm of the spectators must be left to the imagination of readers. All that need be said is that it was intense, and that it was perfectly justifiable, while the notch was admirably obtained. Bee had not the slightest chance of saving. Dodds almost let Galbraith through by a mis-kick; but Earle was unbeatable at this stage, and "Gally" came off second best. A corner to Luton was noted, and Howe sent behind. Gallacher shot splendidly and Earle cleared just as well, while a return attempt from the outside right man went wide. Another corner to the strangers was not any more productive, Jack lodging the ball on the net. After Howe had emulated the example of his opponents by conceding a corner, McCrindle failed badly when he had been presented with an open goal, his shot going very wide of the mark. Gallacher narrowly missed with a grand attempt, and Watkins almost succeeded in scoring for his adversaries; the leather went into Bee's hands, and the keeper was obliged to concede a corner. Clapton put on the steam, and Bee was more than once severely tested; but all the efforts were unavailing. From a centre by Finlayson Prentice dispatched a particularly warm one at Earle, who saved as cleverly as heretofore. Jack troubled the custodian, and from the throw-out Prentice shot just too high. Some laughter was caused by Bee being knocked over with the ball in his hands, though fortunately this was not very close to goal. Tillet had a try to lower the Luton keeper's colours, the only result being the concession of a corner. At the interval the totals were:

Clapton, 2-0; Luton, 1-0.

Clapton, one; Luton, none.

After the resumption minor points against either team were noticed, Clapton being responsible for a couple of fouls. The "reds" broke away and attacked, though without effect, the defence being invariably good. McCrindle forced a corner off Earle, and a little later a foul against Clapton near goal looked ominous; but McCrindle sent in wide. Gallacher once more troubled the home defender, with the result that a further corner fell to the attacking force, who failed to improve upon it. Milton was lavishly cheered for a smart single-handed run which he finished up with an effort to beat Bee. Barely had the applause subsided when another demonstration—though this time on an infinitely smaller scale—welcomed the equalising of the scores by Prentice, Earle falling down in goal. Stimulated by this success the Lutonians exhibited somewhat better form, and there was ample room for improvement. McEwen had a try at scoring from back, though unsuccessfully. Cook gave a corner, and for some seconds the ball was kept bobbing about in front of Earle, it finally finding its way over the line. Gallacher beat Welham cleverly only to steer the ball behind. Galbraith was stopped for getting off-side, and then the Luton forwards made a pretty passing run. Jack sent wide, and subsequently Mayes was punished for holding. Dodds was hurt, though fortunately only slightly, and the next point of interest was a foul against Watkins. Earle gave yet more evidence of his ability as a custodian by repelling several successive attacks by the opposition pack. A tame one from Prentice was followed by Hughes fouling Gallacher badly, and subsequently Earle saved from Prentice. The keeper, however, ran more than the proper distance with the ball in his arms, and a free-kick close to the post threatened to be dangerous; but the "reds" failed to "improve the shining hour." Another fine centre by Gallacher was ineffectual. Finlayson and Jack failed with fair attempts, and after each side had been pulled up for infraction of the rules Galbraith shot just as weakly. One from Hughes at the other end was only partially cleared by Bee; but McEwen was in the vicinity, and he made no mistake in his kick. Jack obtained a corner which led to one or two attacks. The operations thereafter ruled altogether in favour of Luton, and many shots were essayed; but none of these procured the desired result. The final scores were:

Clapton, one; Luton, one.