

THE SOUTHERN LEAGUE.

LUTON TOWN v. CLAPTON.

Played at the Spotted Dog on Saturday. Result :—

Luton Town	1 goal.
Clapton	1 goal.

The teams were as follow :—

RIGHT.		LUTON TOWN.		LEFT.	
		Bee (goal).		McEwen.	
Collins.					
Watkins.		M'Crindle.		Howe.	
Gallacher, Finlayson,		Galbraith.		Prentice.	Jack.
O					
Milton.	Hughes.	Sheldrake.		Hewett.	Tillett.
Welham.		Mayes.		Pursey.	
	Dodds.			Cook.	
		Earle (goal).			
LEFT.		CLAPTON.		RIGHT.	

Referee, Lieut. Chase; linesmen, Messrs. S. Smith (Clapton), and G. H. Barford (Luton).

Luton went to the Spotted Dog on Saturday. So did I. Unfortunately. The fact is, I was particularly anxious to see the Reds win by something pretty substantial, and as a consequence the draw at one goal all came as a grievous disappointment.

The reason I was so very desirous of seeing Luton give Clapton a very handsome drubbing was because of the unsportsmanlike conduct which made the match necessary. At the first time of asking, it will be remembered, the kick-off did not take place until so late that the game could not be played to a finish.

For this the Claptonians were wholly to blame, and that being so it seemed very hard that Luton should be robbed of the victory which was so justly theirs, as when play was stopped they were leading by four goals to one, and could the remaining eighteen minutes have been played, I very truly believe they would have doubled their score, so completely done up were the amateurs.

The Committee of Management ordered the match to be played again, but again fortune favoured the Claptonians, for at the date fixed, they were unable to put a full team in the field, and the match had to be postponed—not because of that, but because of the unfit state of the ground. The same thing occurred a second time, and then Luton, having an eye to the shekel, arranged with them for Saturday last.

On this occasion the Claptonians were able to bring out a strong team, the strongest perhaps they have been represented by during the four months that have elapsed since the first meeting with Luton, and certainly a very different lot from that which went to Millwall to make a holiday for the Dockers on Boxing Day. The result was that Luton had the pieces but lost the points, or one of them at any rate.

But as it was, why did not Luton win? That is the problem which is perplexing me, and it is one to which it is impossible to give a satisfactory and conclusive answer. That Luton ought to have won, there can be no doubt whatever, for in general play the Claptonians were simply not in it.

The contrast between the strength of the two teams was not so apparent in the first half, though even then Luton did the bulk of the pressing, but the play during the second forty-five minutes practically resolved itself into one prolonged attack on the Clapton goal.

The amateurs were seldom able to get over the half-way line, and only once was Bee called upon to save. Seeing that this was so, I again ask why did not Luton win? I admit that the defence opposed to them was very smart, and that Earle kept goal in fine fashion, but after making all allowances of that kind, the fact remains that Luton ought to have romped home.

It seems to me that one reason for the non-success of Luton in the scoring department is a lack of concentration in attack. There are few or none of those combined rushes which so often prove irresistible, even when indulged in by players who have no particular skill.

I noticed on Saturday that when the Claptonians brought their full strength to resist the attack, our fellows were so scattered that it seemed very much like two or three men charging a whole regiment. It therefore followed that the charges, however frequent, were nothing like as dangerous as they should have been. The forwards are not wholly, nor perhaps chiefly, to blame; the unfortunate thing is that there is not enough weight behind them to push them on.

A crowd of about three thousand persons assembled to witness the match, and a rowdy dowdy crowd it was too. Very few of the spectators seemed to have heard of such a thing as fair play, and the manner in which they endeavoured to terrorise over the referee was simply abominable.

I would not have had Mr. Chase's position for a trifle. It was highly creditable to him that he should have discharged his duties in the satisfactory way he did in face of the shouting and booing that was going on around him. The punishment inflicted on the Arsenal does not seem to have had any salutary effect on other Metropolitan crowds.

I am not going to give a long description of the game. It doesn't need it. The kick-off was fixed for half-past three, but the Clapton men only came on one or two at a time, and when Galbraith set the ball rolling five minutes after the half-hour, Mayes was still missing, but he put in an appearance before the game was many minutes old.

Jack ought to have scored for Luton almost immediately, Gallacher furnishing him with a beautiful opening, but he made a sorry kick. Earle saved well soon afterwards from a well-placed corner by Gallacher, and then Clapton retaliated, the Luton defence for a minute or two being hard pressed.

Luton again came within an ace of scoring from a centre by Jack, Earle just succeeding in clearing before Gallacher got on the ball. It was a rare burst of speed on the part of the Luton right winger, and had not Earle been remarkably prompt, he would never have averted the danger. A foul against Gallacher directly after evoked cries of "Play the game, Luton," and then another foul following, there were loud and angry shouts of "Turn him off; turn the Luton man off," but the shouters looked rather foolish when they found the boot was on the other leg, and that it was a Clapton man who had infringed.

But even this miserably one-sided crowd could not refrain from giving Galbraith a cheer when that player worked his way round three or four opponents in succession, and finished up with a hot shot which Earle negotiated. Luton now pressed very severely, but though some capital shots were put in, not one took effect.

At last, Clapton broke away, and a foul against McEwen placed the Luton goal in danger, but Mayes taking the kick, placed the ball in the net, no one touching. After a bit they made another assault, and Watkins gave a corner to a centre by Tillett. This was beautifully placed, and from a scrimmage Sheldrake put the ball by Bee.

This was after thirty minutes' play. Although Luton again had the best of matters during the quarter of an hour before the interval their goal had two narrow escapes, once when Watkins landed the ball on the cross-bar, and again when Bee caught the ball and foolishly held it until he was knocked down. A corner resulted from this, but before it could be taken, the half-time whistle sounded.

When the teams changed ends, fortune for a moment favoured the Claptonians, a free kick being the means of obtaining a corner for them, but this was not turned to account. Then Luton laid siege to the Clapton goal, and a splendid dropping shot by Watkins was well saved by Earle, who directly after, had to give a corner to another shot from the same quarter.

From a free kick undertaken by M'Crindle, the ball was received in front of goal, and put just over the top, and then a couple of good attempts by Jack called for notice, Earle saving grandly from the second, at the expense of a corner, which Gallacher placed behind.

Milton next made a fine run up the field, but sent wide, and Luton trundling the ball back again, Gallacher centred, and after a bit of smart fighting in front of the Clapton goal, in the course of which Earle measured his length on the ground, Galbraith equalised.

It would be wearisome to give details of the play which followed, as it nearly all took place on Clapton territory. Only once was Bee troubled, and that was when Milton got away, being allowed a clear run. McEwen shouted, "Stick to him," but it was too late, and the Claptonian got in a hot shot. Bee saved, but did not clear at the first attempt, and had anyone been up, a score must have resulted.

Many of the shots put in at the Clapton goal were first-raters, but Earle saved good and bad alike, though a grand one by Gallacher he seemed to let go under the bar before he disposed of it, while a couple of hot 'uns by Galbraith were almost more than he could manage.

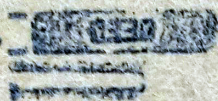
But try as they would, the Reds could not gain the winning point, the call of time finding the scores still even. It must have been terribly mortifying to the Lutonians to be kept at bay as they were, for a draw with Clapton took anything but creditable on paper. The superiority which Luton showed in play does not count.

I suppose I must say a word about the individual players. Gallacher was far and away the best of the forwards, and towards the finish he did as he liked with Welham, who, however, had been a thorn in his side during the earlier portion of the game. Finlayson was quite off-colour.

Galbraith was too well looked after to be able to shine much, and the left wing was not so effective as I have seen it, though Jack got in some good centres. But the five did not hang together well, especially at that moment of attack when combination was most needed.

M'Crindle and Watkins played a fair game at half-back, but Howe was decidedly weak, especially in the matter of placing the ball after he had obtained possession. McEwen was sound as ever at back, but Collins showed a falling off.

Of the Clapton forwards, Milton and Hughes were the most conspicuous of an inconspicuous lot. Hewett, who was only just recovering from influenza, was painfully weak. Mayes and Welham played a splendid game at half-back, and were undoubtedly the best on the field.



Dolds gave a capital exhibition at back, but the best performer of the eleven was Earle in goal. It is an extraordinary thing what good goalkeepers we have opposed to us. There did seem a chance for us on Saturday with a novice between the sticks, but the display given by this novice would have put to shame nine out of ten practised custodians.



The only other Southern League match on Saturday was that between Ilford and Chatham on the ground of the former. Chatham, after twice obtaining the lead, were eventually beaten by three goals to two.