



THE SOUTHERN LEAGUE.

LUTON V. MILLWALL ATHLETIC.

THE REDS LOSE THE DAY. — A STUBBORN GAME.—THE LUTON FORWARDS DEMORALISED

The thousand odd Lutonians who journeyed to Millwall Docks on Saturday in the confident expectation of seeing the downfall of the Southern League champions before the prowess of the Luton Reds, had to return home sad and disappointed. Under certain conditions, and especially considering that out of 4 games last year. Luton only lost one, those anticipations of success were well justified. We all recognised, however, that the chief onus rested upon our forward line, and that unless they played vastly better than against Ilford, there could not be much hope for them in their second and most important League engagement.

As I said last week, if the Reds quintette exhibited the dash and combination they employed to such excellent effect against the R.A. (Portsmouth), there was bound to be some scoring in our favour, perhaps much, perhaps little, but certainly *some*. Then we looked to our sound defence to check the Millwallian onslaughts, and keep the scoring down to close on *nil*.

Well, these were the not too sanguine views which most supporters of the Town club held regarding the great contest. And I think they were based on common-sense. But how were all these calculations upset, and how came it that Luton's hopes were ruthlessly dashed to the ground? In the first place, our forwards were disappointing, to put it mildly. Their attacks lacked sting and combination, and the Millwall back division came off easily best. Nor was our defence as impregnable as we anticipated, and Millwall's second goal was practically a gift, thanks to a muddle between Nicholson and McEwen. If Luton were decidedly "off," Millwall seemed capable of doing nothing wrong and on Saturday's form were quite the better team.

The scorching heat made the series of desperate rushes from St. Pancras to King's Cross, and again from Aldgate to Fenchurch-street, anything but a pleasant experience. Alike on the Metropolitan and Great Eastern, the carriages were terribly over-crowded, the number in some compartments ranging from 16 to 22. The crush was greatest on the little toy railway that runs at a few miles an hour through the Docks. But, at last, we reached East Ferry road. The field of play has undergone a vast improvement, being now nicely covered with turf where not long ago but a few blades of grass eked out a precarious existence. The grand-stand at Millwall, however, is still unworthy of the ground, and the Press accommodation both haphazard and primitive. The grand stand accommodation at Luton is really palatial in comparison.

In the half-hour preceding the play, the Luton Red Cross Silver Prize Band played some excellent selections, and were warmly applauded. Crowds of people were pouring in all the while, and the total assembly was, according to the official estimate, 8,000. I believe that the "gate" receipts amounted to over £200, and that must surely be a record. What a wonderful and blessed thing is League rivalry for the coffers of football clubs! In the grand stand, where there was a strong Lutonian contingent, most of us were making rough guesses as to the result, and surmising how long it would be before the players perspired themselves out of existence.

A great cheer heralded the appearance of the Millwall team, who turned out at 20 minutes to 4, in their neat, close-fitting blue shirts and white knicks. The Luton lads followed half a minute later, and had an ovation from their supporters. At the first glance the Dockers certainly looked smarter, better trained, and more business like than the visitors. The rival teams lined up as follows:—

Luton: Jack, goal, M: D. Nicholson and McEwen, backs; Birch, Stewart, and Docherty, halves; Gallacher, Parkinson, Galbraith, Coupar, and Ekins, forwards.

Millwall: Law, goal; Graham and Davis, backs; King, J. Matthews, and H. Matthews, halves; Jones, McInroy, Whelan, Leatherbarrow, and Geddes, forwards.

Lieut. Simpson, as referee, appeared in white flannels with a wide-brimmed soft felt hat, and looked ready for action anywhere in the tropics. Messrs Hackett and Kidd were the linesmen.

3.45.—For the first time this season, Geddes won the toss, and set Luton to face the dazzling rays of the sun. Galbraith kicked off and aided by a good kick from Nicholson, Gallacher was making headway, when he was fouled by Matthews. Next Whelan handled and the Reds were thus enabled to press vigorously but Stewart shot wide. The Blues soon retaliated and Geddes was bursting down the field when Birch brought him to the ground. Another foul followed against Nicholson, who directly afterwards playfully fisted the ball away close to goal. It was a very warm and exciting time for Luton, and we could all breathe again when Matthews placed the ball in the net untouched. After Geddes had shot over, the Luton forwards got away nicely and from Parkinson's pass, Ekins dashed down his wing but Law ran out and cleared. A couple of free-kicks against the visitors transferred the play to the other end.

3.55.—Geddes was now being carefully fed. Every inch of ground was stubbornly contested and Lieutenant Simpson had to be constantly on the alert. Coupar was fouled, and Ekins got in a shot which struck the wrong side of the net. Parkinson then gave Galbraith what seemed a splendid chance, but the Millwall backs cleared. Hands against Leatherbarrow and Geddes in rapid succession promised extremely well for Luton, but the home backs were as safe as the Bank of England. Jack had to clear a long kick by the home centre, and then from Galbraith's pass, Gallacher got in a high dropping centre, which went behind.

So the battle waged, fortune favouring one side and then the other. The tropical heat now began to tell its tale, and the pace slowed down considerably. King fouled Ekins and a hot attack by Luton was repulsed, Geddes then sending in a very tame shot. At the other end, Parkinson headed wide, and so honours still remained even.

4.5.—Scoring seemed likely to be long delayed, and really circumstances were all in favour of Millwall, who were playing downhill, and with the sun at their backs. While Coupar spoilt a chance by aiming too high, McEwen and Jack in turn dealt with long shots from Geddes. Eventually the Reds seriously threatened danger. From a throw-in near the corner flag, Docherty sent in, and Davis gave Luton the first corner of the day. This was well placed, and amid great excitement, Nicholson landed the ball right in front of Law, a second corner being yielded immediately. The Blues' defence was again sorely taxed, but from Birch's pass, Stewart shot over, amid a chorus of "Well tried, Luton!"

Luton gallantly maintained their pressure. Law saved again from Stewart, and after doing so, roughly swung Galbraith off his legs, a foul resulting in Luton's favour. The kick was taken by Docherty only a few yards from goal, but the danger was averted in a marvellous fashion.

4 15.—The rival elevens were pegging away "hammer and tongs." So far, the balance of play inclined to Luton. Nicholson and Birch became conspicuous for useful defence, and after Jones had been ruled offside, Ekins got in a fine run; Coupar shot beautifully—the best attempt of the day—but Law just saved, Galbraith being penalised apparently for fouling him. As luck would have it, the Millwall forwards now broke away, and Jones sent in a hard centre, which Leatherbarrow converted into Millwall's first goal, with an over-head kick into the top of the net. This success was greeted with a terrific demonstration.

Just 40 minutes had passed when first blood was drawn, and the next incidents were fouls against Docherty and Nicholson, the latter being cautioned. The ball went twice behind the Luton lines, when half time was called with the score—

Millwall, 1 goal.

Luton, 0 "

During the interval, the Red Cross Band performed selections.

Considering everything, Luton had not much cause for discouragement. They had had to play with a brilliant sun dead in their eyes, and to be but a goal behind after the first half was really no discredit to them. Somehow or other,

the Reds seemed to feel the effect of their exertions in the great heat much more acutely than their opponents, who exhibited increased confidence and dash.

4.40.—Geddes at once became dangerous on the re-start, but Jones missed badly. Luton replied with a vigorous spurt, and Birch shot in finely, the ball appearing to cross the line before Law saved. The Reds appealed for a goal, but were awarded a corner. A shot from Ekins produced another corner, but a foul sent the visitors back for a moment. They quickly resumed pressure, however, and after Parkinson had sent across goal, the Luton quintet became very dangerous, but “mulled” the opening.

4.50.—Millwall now made a combined rush, and while Nicholson was keeping a couple of men off, McEwen, alas! clean missed his kick. The result was that Whelan and Leatherbarrow found themselves with only Jack to beat, and dribbled through into the net. This second goal was received with great enthusiasm, and the game was now settled. Luton's fortunes were not improved by the injury of Coupar, who was badly kicked by Matthew's, and had to retire for some minutes. Law saved twice from Galbraith and Stewart, and a couple of fouls were awarded Luton, from which Docherty netted the ball untouched.

Luton had apparently given up hope of getting on level terms, while Millwall were content to keep things merely moving. Graham was unsportsmanlike enough to foul Coupar a minute after he returned limping, and a corner resulted from McEwen's kick, but it brought no advantage. A last effort was made by Ekins, who centred nicely from the line, but Galbraith failed to utilise it, while Law threw away coolly from Gallacher. The game was really over half-an-hour before the finish, when the score stood:

Millwall	..	2 goals
Luton	..	0 „