

THE SOUTHERN LEAGUE.

LUTON TOWN v. MILLWALL.

Played at Millwall on Saturday. Result:—

Millwall.....	2 goals.
Luton Town.....	nil.

The teams were as follow:—

RIGHT.	LUTON TOWN.	LEFT.
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Jack (goal).

Nicholson.

McEwen.

Birch.

Stewart.

Docherty.

Gallagher.	Parkinson.	Galbraith.	Coupar.	Ekine.
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Geddes.	Leatherbarrow.	Whelan.	McInroy.	Jones.
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H. Matthews.

J. Matthews.

King.

Davis.

Graham.

Law (goal).

LEFT.

MILLWALL.

RIGHT.

Referee, Lieut. Simpson; linesmen, Messrs. F. B. Kidd (Millwall) and J. H. Hackett (Luton).

The goal of my ambition is to give everybody the best value for their money. All goods sold by me are of a guaranteed quality. Style to suit the eye, prices to suit the pocket.—S. Bassett, 28, Wellington-street. —[Advt.]

Luton came a cropper on Saturday, and no mistake. The thousand and odd Lutonians who made the journey to Millwall were, generally speaking, so cock-sure of victory that they were quite unprepared for any other result, and they were still more unprepared for the indifferent show made by their representatives.

Buoyant and hopeful, the Reds went to town,
In order the Dockers to beat, oh;
But sad and dispirited came they down,
With nought but a tale of defeat, oh.

There is no getting away from the fact that the result of the game was a big surprise to the great majority of Lutonians, who had confidently counted upon the ability of the Reds to take a couple of points out of the Blues. But its one thing to decide a match on paper, and another thing to work it out in the field.

The real truth of the matter is, however, we had been living in a fool's paradise. We had been comparing our team, man for man, with that of Millwall, and losing sight of the not unimportant point that ours had not been afforded the same facilities for getting licked into shape.

Only last week, when we were in the full flush of a five goals to nil victory over Ilford, I did my best to show that our forwards were in far from a satisfactory state as regards combination, and the committee themselves, alive to the same weakness, impressed upon the members of the front string the necessity of paying more attention to the passing game.

Unfortunately for us, in this instance at any rate, there is a vast difference between theory and practice, and talk never has, and never will, have much effect upon men's feet. Wise injunctions may produce good intentions, but it requires something more than that to carry players through a match like that of Saturday.

I still believe that as far as the material goes, we have a better team than Millwall can put in the field, but the ability is to a large extent latent, and wants opportunities of development. It is in this respect that the Dockers have the advantage of us, and that advantage stood them in good stead on Saturday.

They had played nearly double as many matches as we had—nine to five—and that in itself was much in their favour, but then just look at the calibre of the teams met. Burslem Port Vale, Glossop North End, Woolwich Arsenal, Leicester Fosse, and Sheffield Wednesday. Why, the very worst team they had taken on was equal to the best of those with whom Luton had had to cope.

If only the experience of the two teams had been reversed, I am convinced that Luton would have knocked the Dockers into a cocked hat. As a matter of fact it was not until their meeting with Sheffield that Millwall began to show anything like good form, and consequently we had to go through the mill with them at the moment when they are approaching tip-top form and while we are yet at sixes and sevens.

The Luton eleven, to get into proper trim, stand in urgent need of more matches and against teams of better quality. Thank goodness, we stand a chance of getting them now. But the pity is that so much should have depended upon the first decent game in which the Reds have taken part.

Not that I think there is any need to be particularly cast down over the result of this match. The championship of the Southern League was not decided on Saturday. Not by any means. We shall have the pleasure of entertaining Millwall at the beginning of December, and we have then only to return the compliment to get on equal terms. That should not be a difficult task.

What we have to be equally careful about is not to give ourselves away in any of the less important matches, as we did last year. The points which our men have to study are: To keep in proper training and condition, sacrifice individuality to combination, and to maintain control of themselves on the field. Moreover, let them under all circumstances shun alcoholic liquors as they would—well, a certain individual who shall be nameless.

It's a big order, perhaps, but as athletes it is one which they should take a pride in carrying out. If they will do it, I wouldn't mind laying my bottom dollar on their coming out all right at the finish. Millwall have got far more reason for anxiety than we have. As regards their attack, they are still dependent in a great measure on one man, and that is a bad thing for any team.

Descending from generalities to details, I will confine my attention to Saturday's proceedings. When it was announced that Mr. Shackleton had arranged for a special train to take enthusiastic Luton footballers to London at two shillings a head, it soon became evident that there would be an exodus from Strawopolis, and such a rush was there for tickets that the whole four hundred were speedily taken up, and another special had to be arranged for.

Then in addition, tickets at a single fare for the return journey were issued by the 12.25 and 1.53 trains, and these were largely taken up. Altogether considerably over a thousand persons made the trip to Millwall, and a warm enough one they found it.

The sweltering conditions prevailing made the long and tedious journey quite enough to ruin the chances of the Luton team, and must have gone a long way to nullify the good effects of the training they had received. How vastly different from the state of things which obtained when we last visited Millwall. The frost was then so bitter that there was some doubt as to whether the match would be played.

The Lutonians, being among the earliest arrivals on the field, speedily monopolised the grand stand, and very few of the regular visitors to the ground succeeded in getting seats there. At half-past two a very fair number of people had assembled, and for nearly an hour and a half after that, the supporters of both clubs, together with many others, kept streaming in.

Owing to the almost tropical heat—the thermometer registered 81 degrees in the shade—the kick-off was delayed till a quarter to four, and by that time the crowd had reached enormous dimensions. Altogether, I should say there must have been 10,000 persons present. The gate realised, I am told, upwards of £200.

During the period of waiting, the Luton Red Cross Band went into the open and played a selection of music, their efforts being much appreciated. If they worked their collection well, I should say they must have beaten their record, as everybody seemed willing to give when called upon.

Skelton's Football Boots are all made on the premises and are guaranteed to give perfect satisfaction to wearers. They are a special study for the season.—
[ADVT.]

At twenty-two minutes to four, the Dockers made their way on to the field, looking very spick and span in clean white knickerbockers and blue shirts. The Reds followed immediately, and were greeted even more enthusiastically than their opponents had been. The referee, Lieut. Simpson, next appeared in a wonderful get-up, and the preliminaries were quickly arranged.

The Lieutenant assembled the men together at the outset, and presumably gave them a few words of salutary advice. Docherty, for once in a way, lost the flag, and this meant a good deal, Luton having to play the first half with the sun full in their eyes.

The game had scarcely been started before a foul was given against King, who evinced an amount of affection for Gallacher which the referee thought was simulated rather than real, and Coupar receiving from the free kick, transferred to Stewart, who sent wide.

Then hands against Whelan enabled Nicholson to place the ball again in the vicinity of the Millwall goal, but Geddes broke loose, and Birch, finding he can't catch him in any other way, put his foot out, the speedy left winger came to a dead stop. You would have heard the yells—not from Geddes, but from the spectators.

A foul against Nicholson did not improve matters, and the shouts of indignation turned to jeers a moment later, when Nicholson deliberately put up his hand and stopped a beautiful centre by Geddes. J. Matthews, from the free kick, landed the ball in the net, but as its progress had not been interfered with, was nothing for anyone to cry or rejoice about.

having had to save from a soft one, Geddes after got in a lovely dropping shot which

missed the upright by a few inches. Ekins next travelled to the other end from a good pass by Parkinson, but the ball went too far forward and Law ran out and cleared. The Luton forwards having elicited cheers for a pretty piece of passing, the Dockers worked the leather back again, and hands against Birch gave Geddes a chance to show his judgment, but once more the ball went into goal untouched.

After this Coupar did a smart sprint, but was promptly tripped when danger threatened, and from the free kick Ekins obtained possession and missed the mark with a good shot by inches only. The Luton forwards, who seemed to afford promise of better things, again went for the Millwall goal in capital style, but a foul against Galbraith for pushing brought the effort to a premature close.

From a nice pass by Parkinson, Gallacher got in a grand dropping shot; but the ball went just behind. Soon afterwards, Parkinson, profiting by an overhead kick by his partner, placed the sphere in the mouth of the goal, but after a desperate bit of work, the Blues gave Lutonians the blues by effecting a clearance.

Galbraith, Parkinson, and Gallacher distinguished themselves by a first-rate bit of combination, and the Dockers goal was in placed in jeopardy, but ultimately Parkinson headed behind. Birch soon afterwards obtained the ball and put in a beautiful centre, which Coupar made a gallant attempt to convert, his shot skimming the bar.

McEwen having frustrated an endeavour by Geddes to turn to account a centre from Jones, a free kick fell to Millwall for a foul throw in, and Geddes received and put in a clinker, which Jack successfully negotiated.

The Luton left wing forcing matter a bit, Graham kicked out close to the flagstaff, and then Docherty getting in a good shot, Law gave a corner. Nothing came of it, but from a foul against Graham, Nicholson took the kick and Birch placed in front of goal, but ultimately Stewart headed behind.

Jones having spoiled a good opening at the other end by falling down at the critical moment, Luton went back, Ekins eventually being badly fouled by King. In the attack following on, Galbraith went for Law, but the latter got rid of the ball and then attempted to throw the Luton centre. Thus the Reds had a free kick awarded them close up, but the play, though exciting, led to nothing tangible.

In repelling a Millwall assault, Nicholson and Docherty did yeoman service, which was not unrecognized by the crowd, and then Ekins got in one of his best runs, but was finally pulled up by Graham, Coupar, however, sent in a ripping shot, which the Millwall custodian disposed of.

After this, a momentary relaxation of effort by the Luton defence had dire consequences. Somehow or another, Jones got a clear field, and taking his time, middled to a nicety. Leatherbarrow pounced on the ball and his shot, a hot 'un, hit the inside of the cross-bar and glanced into the net.

This was dreadful! It wanted only five minutes to the interval. If Luton had obtained that goal, I verily believe they would have romped home, for up to this point there is no doubt that, notwithstanding the disadvantage of the sun, they had given a better show than Millwall.

Alas, poor Luton! How often it is
That the team that plays best gets not the first goal,
Which the issue so often decides;
The strong does not always the weaker control,
For skill's not in it when luck takes sides.

No sooner had the goal been registered against them, than Luton began to go badly, and fouls against Stewart and Nicholson did not improve matters. It was a relief to the Bedfordshire portion of the spectators when the whistle blew for half-time to find that the Dockers had only one goal to their credit, which was nothing very great under the circumstances.

If the Luton forwards could have put any sting in their attacks, there is no doubt that the first forty-five minutes would have told a very different tale, but the men seemed to lack dash in front of goal and generally fiddled about with the ball until they lost it. Considering their opportunities, they had not sent in half as many shots as they ought to have done.

Upon the resumption of hostilities, Geddes got hold of a centre from King in marvellous style, and transferring to Leatherbarrow, that player put in a fine shot, which Jack saved, and Jones then sent behind. Luton retaliated, and Birch was responsible for a lovely shot, which Law stepped back to catch. Galbraith and Parkinson were on the spot, and it seemed as though a goal must have been scored, but Luton's appeal was disregarded. It was dreadfully hard lines.

A couple of corners for Luton followed, but neither of them was turned to account. Docherty, however, again put the ball well up, and Galbraith having been knocked over, Coupar sent in a smart shot, which just shaved the upright.

Geddes putting behind a corner conceded by Nicholson, Luton once again changed the venue, but Parkinson and Ekins both dallied with the ball, and eventually King ran off with it. Then a grave misfortune befel Luton. Leatherbarrow and Whelan were making for the Luton goal, and Nicholson took the man while McEwen took the kick. Extraordinary as it may seem, Mac clean missed the ball, and it was then it was the easiest matter in the world for Leatherbarrow to put on the finishing touch.

I will gladly draw a veil over the rest of the game. Science, which had never been conspicuous, was entirely neglected, and the ball might fairly well have been dispensed with. Foulding was the order of the day, and though it was six of one and half-a-dozen of the other, Luton came off second best. Coupar was hurt, and had to retire for a time. He came on again, but was never any more good.

Once Lieut. Simpson had to stop play and call the men together in order to give them a lecture. Luton subsequently made one or two desperate attempts to retrieve their fortunes, and on one occasion Law saved wonderfully from a scrimmage on the Millwall goal-line, the result of a shot from Stewart.

During the last twenty-five or thirty minutes, however, Luton for the most part played a losing game. The team completely fell to pieces, and it was really pitiable to see the despairing sort of struggle which they made. The Dockers fairly played with them.

Under all the circumstances we have to be thankful that we were let down as lightly as we were. If the Millwallians had chosen to exert themselves, I really believe they could have made things a trifle warmer for us during the period following Coupar's retirement.

The game, as an exposition of football, was not a great one. Neither side showed any combination worth speaking of, and as regards the winners, their strength certainly lay in their defence. The half-backs, their fouling propensities apart, played sound football, and the backs also proved themselves pretty well impregnable. They had any amount of dash, and went for the ball like bulls at a haystack. Their methods were certainly not gentle. Law acquitted himself well.

Geddes, of course, was far and away the best of the forwards. He was in better trim than ever I had seen him, being slimmer, faster, and an improvement all round on the Geddes of last year. If he had been allowed a little more freedom, he would, without doubt, have given a brilliant show. Leatherbarrow was a bigger and a better man than I expected to see, but there's not a great deal to be said for the others.

As to the Luton team, Coupar was undoubtedly the best of the forwards, and Parkinson, though now and then caught tripping, exhibited considerable improvements on previous displays. I give all the forwards credit for doing their best, but they, like the rest of the team, were carried away by excitement. What they have to learn is to hang together. There must be more concentration in attack instead of that spread-eagle business in front of goal. The outside men should centre sooner and should close in more when they get near the uprights.

Docherty did wonders at half-back, and was perhaps the best half on the field. Birch, being tied to Geddes, did not have many opportunities of showing off, but he nevertheless acquitted himself pretty well. Strangely enough, Stewart, who had been going so strongly hitherto, was clean off-song.

Nicholson, although using his weight a great deal too much to suit my possibly meek and mild ideas of football, did his side excellent service, and McEwen, apart from his one unfortunate mistake, played a sound game, but was not quite as brilliant as usual. Jack was not severely tested. He, however, was not in any way to blame for the two goals scored against him.

The best value for money is to be obtained at Kelton and Son's, The Leather Boot Makers, 31, Wellington-street, Luton.—[ADVT.]

The other Southern League matches resulted pretty much in accordance with anticipation. Reading, on their own ground, proved too much for Southampton t. Mary's, whom they beat by three goals to two, and Ratham beat Ilford at Ilford by a goal to nil. The Southern League table now stands as follows:—

	Goals							
	Pld.	Won.	Lost.	Drawn.	For.	Agst.	Pts	
Ratham	4	3	0	1	11	5	7	
Millwall Athletic..	2	2	0	0	4	0	4	
Reading	3	2	1	0	6	6	4	
New Brompton....	2	1	0	1	5	2	3	
Luton Town.....	2	1	1	0	5	2	2	
Windon Town....	1	1	0	0	2	1	2	
Southampton St. Mary's	3	0	3	0	3	8	0	
Ilford	3	0	3	0	1	9	0	
Royal Ordnance ..	1	0	1	0	1	2	0	
Lapton	1	0	1	0	2	5	0	

On Saturday, Luton have a League match on their own ground, Reading being the visitors, and, shall we say, the victims. Let's hope so, at any rate. The referee will be our old friend, Lieut. Chase. There's no doubt the biscuit boys will make us go all the way, but I have confidence that Luton will pull it off.

The committee have adopted the suggestion I threw out as to transposing Coupar and Parkinson, and I trust that the change will work satisfactorily. I must say, however, that I should have been more pleased if a friendly of some sort been played during the week, so that the men could have had a better chance of settling down before entering upon a League match.

On Monday, we are to receive a visit from Rotherham, and I hope the gate will be such as to encourage the committee to persevere with Monday matches.