

THE ENGLISH CUP.

LUTON TOWN v. TOTTENHAM HOTSPUR.

Played at Luton on Saturday. Result :—

Tottenham Hotspur	2 goals.
Luton Town	1 goal.

The teams were as follow :—

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

Nicholson.	McEwen.
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Birch.	Stewart.	Docherty.
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Gallacher.	Coupar.	Galbraith.	Parkinson.	Ekins.
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Payne.	Clement.	Hunter.	Owen.	Pryor.
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Mackenzie.	Collins.	Shepherd.
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Briggs.	Burrows.
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Ambler (goal.)

LEFT.	TOTTENHAM HOTSPUR.	RIGHT.
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Referee, Mr. T. W. Saywell; linesmen, Messrs. S. Pakes (Luton), and H. D. Casey (Tottenham).

Oh, dear, what can the matter be?

Oh, Reds, who is to flatter thee?

Oh, dear, won't there a clatter be,

'Cause of this wretched affair.

We promised the Spurs their eleven we'd sit on,
But somehow or other we never could "git" on,
Our players had clearly not got the right fit on,
And nothing but sorrow's our share.

There was nothing but lamentation, execration, and other "ations" of a similar character in Luton on Saturday night. The man who follows the fortunes of a football team expects to get acquainted with the ups and downs of life, but there is a limit to human endurance even in this direction, and that limit was touched by Lutonians last week.

Only on the Monday we were all in the seventh heaven of delight, flattering ourselves that we'd spent the money, we'd got the team, and the goals were coming too. Then, in less than a week, quite a different complexion was put on affairs, and the exultation on the Monday was changed to execration on the Saturday.

If anyone but a hot and strong partisan of Tottenham Hotspur had told me previous to the match that Luton were going to be beaten by the Northumberland Park lot, I should have regarded him as a fit candidate for a lunatic asylum. I would never have believed such a contingency possible.

The remembrance of a certain Polytechnic match ought perhaps to have put us on our guard, but then things have progressed since the visit to Wimbledon. On that occasion Luton had a somewhat motley lot to represent them, but on Saturday the full team was in the field, every man being available and presumably in the best possible condition.

It's a difficult thing, a very difficult thing, to explain the inexplicable, and it is a task I don't care about taking on. How on earth did Luton allow themselves to be knocked out of time by a team which really are not fit to hold a candle to them?

To make the thing more incomprehensible, just study form for a moment. Luton beat Ilford by five goals to nil, Ilford beat Clapton by two to nil, Clapton beat Tottenham Hotspur by five goals to four, and then Tottenham turn round and beat Luton by two to one.

We talk about the glorious uncertainty of cricket, and the in and out form shown on the turf, but seemingly they are as nothing compared with the vagaries of football teams. It would, of course, rob the game of a great deal of its pleasure if we could cast up the chances with anything like mathematical precision, but still there ought to be no reasonable doubt about the result when teams like Luton and Hotspur are engaged.

To what, then, do I attribute Luton's ignominious defeat? Well, personally, it is an infinitely more satisfactory duty to allocate the credit for victory than to apportion the blame for a beating, but still the unenviable task has to be taken in hand sometimes, and unfortunately it falls to my lot at the present moment.

Most people, I dare say, have been unsparing in their condemnation of Jack. In fact, I know they have. They have said that if there had been a transposition of goal-keepers, Luton would have won hands down. To a great extent that is true. Jack was as weak as Ambler was strong; the one gave way before the attack and the other made the attack give way before him. It means a lot of difference.

That accounts for the defeat, but what about the fiasco? For surely it was nothing but a fiasco for a team which on the Monday carried all before it against a strong combination like Rotherham, to crack up on Saturday before a comparatively weak team like Tottenham Hotspur.

To my mind, then, the fiasco is attributable in great degree to Nicholson. Undoubtedly the old West Bromwich man has been a brilliant back in his time; indeed, he has played some brilliant games for Luton—but not this season. He has not been responsible for a single good performance during the four or five matches that he has taken part in, but on Saturday his display was worse than ever.

It seemed to me that in the first half he demoralised the whole team. He nearly always took the man instead of the ball, and generally he went about his work as though he thought it was not worth while to exert himself against a lot of small fry. When he ran, it was in such a lob-a-dob-dob, lackadaisical sort of style, that it gave one the impression that he thought to-morrow would do as well as to-day.

I felt truly sorry for Birch, because he never knew where to find his back or what he would do when he did find him. I would not speak out as strongly about Nicholson if I thought he did his best, but I don't think he did, and when a man doesn't choose to do his best we can do better without him than with him.

Now I will leave an unpleasant subject, or rather the most unpleasant part of an unpleasant subject, and proceed to speak of the game generally. It was timed to begin at half-past three, and Referee Saywell started the players almost to the minute.

Its coming! The cold weather! Be prepared for it by procuring an overcoat. Shirts and pants, flannel shirts, half hose and fancy worsted hose, everything in wearing apparel to make you comfortable at the lowest price of S. Bassett, gents, youths, and boys' complete outfitter, Luton.—[Advt.]

There were about three thousand spectators on the ground, and of these about a score in the grand stand were followers of the Spurs. Those twenty individuals were an unmitigated nuisance. They halloed and shouted, and set others halloaing and shouting, the consequence being that the state of affairs was something like pandemonium let loose.

The weather was all that could be desired, except for a rather strong wind, and the ground was in capital order. The visitors won the toss, and probably won the game at the same time, for their rushes were not rendered the less dangerous by reason of Luton having the sun in their eyes and the wind against them.

Luton were not the first to attack, but they were the first to get dangerous, and twice Ambler had to save from headers by Coupar, while a shot from Elkins went the wrong side of the net, and a centre from Gallacher passed across the mouth of goal and behind. Then a splendid run by Pryor and a capital middle led to a bit of sharp work in front of the home goal, but eventually the ball went out of play.

A moment later, Payne headed a beauty on to the cross-bar, and Luton retaliating on the left, Ambler had to save from Parkinson. The Luton forwards now showed a glimpse of their best form, and Galbraith got in a couple of shots, the second of which, a grand one, was followed by a tremendous scrimmage in the mouth of goal, Coupar ultimately raising the siege by sending over.

Then again the Spurs went up the field, and Hunter, with a fine long shot, hit the crossbar a rare smack. Stanley Briggs had now changed places with Collins, and his presence in the centre did something to disorganise the Luton attack. Fouls against Galbraith and Collins were not improved upon, and then Payne walked round Nicholson, and put in a good centre, which Jack disposed of.

Play was again transferred to the other end, and Gallacher, taking advantage of a centre by Elkins, put in twice beautifully, the second shot especially being a grand one, but the Hotspur custodian, though Ambler by name, is certainly not an ambler by nature, and no space between the sticks was left unoccupied.

However, there was another desperate scrimmage almost on the goal-line, and ultimately Luton forced a corner through Elkins, who placed beautifully from the flag-staff, and Stewart tried hard to convert, but failed. The visitors responded, and once more the Hotspur left wing fooled Nicholson, and Clement got in a smart long shot. Jack saved, but then appeared paralysed, allowing the ball to remain within two or three yards of him till Owen rushed up and put it through.

The Luton spectators were dumb-founded, but the noise made by the Spurs supporters was sufficient for the whole field. Nearly thirty minutes had elapsed, and in the quarter of an hour that remained before half-time, it was confidently expected that Luton would succeed in equalising. But the equalising goal never came.

A few minutes after the Spurs had scored, Collins and Briggs got hurt at the same time, and Briggs had to retire. When play was resumed, Luton went down the field, and Gallacher and Elkins both sent in capital centres. Following on the second, there was another fierce struggle, almost under the cross-bar, but there seemed to be some charm about Ambler and his goal, for the ball would not go over the line.

Then the whistle blew, and the teams crossed over

with the Spurs leading by a goal to nil. Now surely we should see a change. Now Luton would pile it on, score goal upon goal, and run out the winners with something to spare. Those who had any such expectations were woefully disappointed.

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Ekins soon got away, and put in a long hard drive, which Ambler disposed of. Then Nicholson, as if to make up for his previous shortcomings, sent the ball up beautifully, and Parkinson headed behind. The visiting team, it should be stated, had undergone rearrangement, Owen going back and Collins taking his place at inside right.

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After about nine minutes' play, Birch let in the left wing, and Nicholson failing to repair the mischief, Clement centred, and Hunter, to the consternation of the Luton supporters, registered a second goal for Tottenham.

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Up to this moment, there never had been any doubt that Luton would pull through all right, but now it was different, and the Reds at once showed that they saw the danger by indulging in a lot of wild kicking, and every man endeavouring to do every other man's work and leaving his own neglected.

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The result was that the Spurs, who were now minus the services of Briggs, soon menaced the Luton goal again, and Jack saved a beautiful shot by Clement following upon a good centre from Payne. The real superiority of Luton, however, quickly reasserted itself, and a lovely shot by Galbraith would have got by nine goal-keepers out of ten.

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Ambler saved, however, in extraordinary manner, falling on the ball and even then tricking his opponents. Ekins next put in a shot, and once more there was an exciting mêlée in the mouth of the Tottenham goal. Still the ball would not go through. A moment later, Stewart sent the leather crashing against the bar, and Birch just about succeeded in his attempt to take a portion of the outer coat of paint off the same piece of furniture.

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Galbraith next had the hardest of hard luck in not scoring, the ball catching his head on the wrong side and going just by the post, when there seemed nothing to stop it from going into goal, and this sort of luck was experienced directly after from a well-placed kick by Birch.

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At last, Luton broke their spell of ill fortune. The left wing got away, and Parkinson holding Burrows at bay—how he did it had better not be told—while Ekins centred, Galbraith headed a good goal. There was much cheering at this, and as fifteen minutes remained for play, it was anticipated that Luton would at least equalise.

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Briggs, however, came on again, and there is no doubt that he succeeded in saving the game for the visitors. The excitement was intense. For a quarter of an hour Luton bombarded the Tottenham goal, but try as they would they could not get the ball in the net.

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Collins gave a corner to a splendid centre by Gallacher, and Birch placed beautifully, but Docherty eventually sent over. Ambler next saved from a fine shot by Stewart, and then from a well-judged kick by Docherty, Gallacher headed an inch or two above the bar. A cross-shot from Gallacher ran clean along the cross-bar, and from a splendidly-placed corner by Ekins, Ambler saved in grand style.

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Receiving from a throw-in, Coupar put in a beauty, which the Tottenham custodian saved, and to a hot 'un by Ekins, Ambler conceded a corner, which was not turned to account. From capital centres by Nicholson and Birch, Galbraith and Ekins headed just by the post, and then the whistle blew, leaving Tottenham the lucky, but deserving, winners of a disappointing game by two goals to one.

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They deserved to win because of the game way in which they played from start to finish; they were lucky to win because their opponents had fully three-fourths of the play, and even on the form shown, Luton, with reasonable luck, should have won by a margin of three or four goals. Jack had about six shots to stop, whereas Ambler had nearer sixty.

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To Ambler, indeed, belonged the chief credit of the victory. He was a marvel. Burrows played a grand game at back, and Owen made him a capital partner. The half-backs did wonders, especially considering Briggs' misfortune, and the forwards performed very smartly. Payne and Clement made a dangerous left wing, Pryor worked splendidly on the right, and Hunter did well at centre.

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As to the Luton team, the forwards were the best of the bunch, but they made the mistake of not giving the outside men enough to do. It was a pity, particularly in view of the grand show which Gallacher and Ekins made on the Monday. The halves did not strike me as being in the best of form, Stewart perhaps being the strongest of the three. Birch was sadly inconvenienced by Nicholson's eccentricities.

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McEwen did everything that man could have done, except once or twice when he got a little ruffled. Jack seems to be strangely off in goal, and does not fulfil the expectations formed of him at the end of last season. I am sorry, as I had hoped that after several years' trial we had at last found a good man.

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To some extent, perhaps, blame attaches to the whole of the team. They held their opponents too cheaply, and reserved their effort until it was too late to avert disaster. It is a common error; indeed, to a greater or lesser degree, it is the besetting sin of all football teams.

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

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Millwall made pretty well as big a muddle of it as Luton. They went to New Brompton, and although the latter for sixty minutes out of the ninety played only ten men, the Dockers had the hardest possible work to scrape home by a goal to nil. Considering that on the previous Saturday they beat New Brompton by eight to nothing, there is a little inconsistency of form here.

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Among other clubs engaged in the Cup-ties, West Herts beat Norwich C.E.Y.M.S. by 2 to 1, Barking Woodville knocked St. Albans out by 2 to nil, and Ilford defeated Clapton by the same margin, Royal Ordnance beat Royal Scots by 3 to 1, Eastleigh beat Clifton by 9 to love, Glossop North End lorded it over Macclesfield to the tune of 5 to 1, and Rotherham made a draw with Barnsley St. Peter's at one goal all.

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The following is the result of the draw for the first and second rounds in the Bedfordshire Cup Competition: First round: Bedford Town v. Wymington Star; Luton Reserves v. Volunteers; Bedford Rovers v. Leighton Cee Springs; Excelsior (First) v. Dunstable (Second); Excelsior (Second) v. Ampthill; Bedford Queen's, Dunstable (First); and Powage Albion and District F.C. byes. To be played on or before November 23rd.

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Second Round:—Bedford Rovers or Leighton Cee Springs v. Excelsior (First) or Dunstable (Second); Powage Albion and District v. Bedford Queen's F.C.; Dunstable (First) v. Luton Reserves or Volunteers; Bedford Town or Wymington Star v. Ampthill or Excelsior (Second). To be played on or before Jan. 4th.

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If you are playing football this season you will require a pair of good boots. Get them made at Skelton's, Wellington-street.—[ADVT.]