

FOOTBALL.

LUTON AND THE LEAGUE.

SOUTHAMPTON ST. MARY'S BEATEN.

ANOTHER DEFEAT AVENGED.

History is repeating itself in regard to Luton football this season, for it was the general experience in the past that when the Lutonians were beaten away from home they managed to obtain the better of their opponents at home. Saturday saw a performance of this nature carried out by the locals. On the last Saturday in October Southampton—by means of a variety of circumstances which it is not necessary to dilate upon here—managed to win on their own ground against the Lutonians by two to one; on Saturday the Bedfordshire lot reversed this verdict by scoring three to none against the seashiders. The encounter was more than usually interesting, for victory to the homesters meant that they were absolutely certain—so far as certainties can be reckoned upon in football, that is—of taking second place in the Southern League. This they succeeded in doing, and not only did they thus assure their position but they still further improved the magnificent record of which the team is this season able to boast.

Both sides were at full strength, as will be gleaned from a glance at the following teams which faced Mr. F. R. Johnson at the time fixed for the kick-off:—

Luton Town: Goal, Williams; backs, McCartney and McEwen; half-backs, Watkins, Stewart (captain) and Docherty; forwards, Gallacher and Coupar (right), Galbraith (centre), Birch and Ekins (left).

Southampton St. Mary's: Goal, Cain; backs, Meston and Thompson; half-backs, Taylor, Littlehales and Hodgkinson; forwards, Baker and Naughton (right), Farrell (captain) (centre), Keay and Turner (left).

Linesmen, Messrs. E. A. Barford (Luton) and McMillan (Southampton).

Farrell won the toss and elected to play uphill. "Gally" duly set the ball rolling, and in a minute or so Ekins had succeeded in putting in one of those speedy runs which have been such a noticeable feature of his play recently. From a throw-in Stewart sent behind; then Gallacher raced away and looked dangerous when he was pulled up. The home lot attacked very hotly and Ekins steered just wide, while another of the "whites"—for the Lutonians were white once more—was similarly unlucky. A foul against Watkins had the effect of removing the fray to the other end, and a strong attack was initiated by Southampton. The game was so well forced by the visitors that Williams was compelled to handle, while McCartney eventually cleared in really excellent style. A foul against the strangers led to a transference of the operations to the So'ton half, Birch distinguishing himself hereabouts by sending in a good shot. Galbraith managed to get through and he seemed to be in a good position for scoring; but his final effort was not nearly smart enough. The seizure of the Southampton colours was not long delayed, though, for a corner accrued to Luton just after from which Stewart had no difficulty in heading through. This first slice of good luck came nine minutes from the commencement, and it was heartily cheered by the crowd. It should be said, however, that a good number of visitors from Southampton who had congregated on the grand-stand did not appear to relish the reverse, and they thereafter adopted a tone of carping criticism which provoked some amusing retorts. No reference has yet been made, by the way, to that important factor in affairs of this kind—the weather. It was not, then, at all propitious, and the wonder is that the large crowd of close upon 4,000 were tempted to stand about the ground in the damp. There were plenty of opportunities for indulging in applause, though, and it would appear that the ordinary football enthusiast rises superior to the discomforts of bad weather. However that may be, it is certain that the crowd generally appeared delighted with what they were enabled to witness. There had been a good deal of dubiety in some quarters as to the probable result of the match, and it was not until the first goal had been credited to Luton that the local section of the spectators got on good terms with themselves. Soon after the re-start McEwen gave a corner in attempting to clear from a good run by the St. Mary's right wing. This was unproductive, and a foul on Gallacher by Hodgkinson had the effect of removing the scene of operations to the visitors' confines once more. Galbraith managed to get in a beauty from a centre by Ekins, this having been preceded by some exceedingly pretty and effective play on the part of the home left wing pair. Cain experienced more than ordinary difficulty in clearing from "Gally's" shot. At the other end in a little while McCartney cleared brilliantly when the downfall of the Luton fortress appeared imminent. Gallacher got away well down his wing, only to be pulled up nastily by one of his adversaries. A little later on Naughton dispatched a well-judged effort at Williams's charge; but fortunately the ball travelled wide of the mark. McEwen brought down the displeasure of the referee upon himself by fouling Baker somewhat unnecessarily; Taylor took the free-kick and sent ludicrously wide amid laughter. Hands against Watkins again beat the Luton men back, though nothing more serious came of it. An extraordinary decision by the referee was noticed hereabouts. One of the "Saints" charged Galbraith with his leg up, and to the general amazement Mr. Johnson awarded a free-kick to the visitors. Williams had the opportunity from this of showing that he is not easily beaten. Just after Galbraith headed through from a fine centre by Ekins; but Mr. Johnson once more surprised the crowd by disallowing the point on the ground of off-side—the astonishment being this time mingled with disappointment which was well grounded, for the notch was in the judgment of most onlookers a genuine

onslaught which the "whites" were conducting brought its reward, for when Stewart had been penalised for handling and Coupar had shot well Gallacher lowered Cain's colours with a smart shot from a lovely header by Stewart. On the resumption the homesters continued to press. Galbraith was nastily fouled, and later on Cain was injured during a melee near goal. Next Baker was accidentally kicked by Docherty; but the suspension of operations which this necessitated was not of long duration. Hands against Luton had the effect of giving the Southampton men a chance at the home end and they made use of it to attack very hotly. The locals were sorely taxed for a minute or two; but their defence was very fine, and they succeeded in staving off bad results. Williams saved magnificently once, and Watkins was responsible for the strong kick which eventually removed all danger. Again the referee came down on a Lutonian, Galbraith being stopped for jumping, though Meston had "set" himself for the centre man. Ekins evoked a well-deserved burst of applause by racing away at full speed and sending in a teaser to Cain. Coupar sent in well from Ekins, and after a grand long effort by Stewart had struck the bar and bounded over a free-kick for hands was awarded to Luton near goal. A closely contested struggle ensued, and in the scrimmage Coupar sent through. The point was energetically protested against by Southampton on the ground of alleged handling; but the referee declined to alter his decision. The dissatisfaction amongst the visitors was apparently very great and the re-start was delayed for a minute or two owing to their evident disinclination to resume. At length the referee peremptorily whistled them to recommence, and they had the good sense to abstain from further childish behaviour, though from this time onward their display was marked by the exhibition of more roughness than was warranted. Hands against Southampton was balanced by a foul against Watkins, and towards the end of the first half the visitors had a bit the best of matters. They failed to secure anything tangible, though, and the midway stage arrived with the score-sheet standing thus:—

LUTON, THREE; ST. MARY'S, NONE.

After the interval the first point of importance was that St. Mary's were pulled up for fouling, and another nasty foul on Watkins followed. Gallacher and Coupar were applauded for an extremely pretty run on the right wing, and then "Gally" managed to get off-side. A couple of similar decisions against the Southampton right wingers were noted in a minute or two, and from the second free-kick Coupar shot fairly well. Docherty centred splendidly immediately after; but without avail, the forwards not being near enough to take advantage of the opportunity. A foul against Luton was equalised by a nasty one on Birch, who had been working extremely well just now. A big struggle ensued close to the Southampton posts, though without result so far as scoring by Luton was concerned. Hands against the homesters was followed by a free-kick against Watkins for fouling, from which Taylor again shot wide. Galbraith was adjudged off-side and Watkins was stopped for fouling amid laughter. More rough play by the "Saints" was witnessed, following which Gallacher sent in a hot one from a neat effort by Coupar, Birch landing the ball over the bar in the end. McCartney sent behind from a free-kick against the strangers for an abominable foul, a corner being forced by Gallacher soon after. Williams was called upon to handle two or three times in rapid succession, though neither of the attempts by the "Saints" was very dangerous. McCartney later on managed to get in the way of a well-directed shot, this resulting in a corner; the visitors swarmed to the attack, but were repulsed with comparative ease. Farrell, who had not been doing anything particularly effective (he was too persistently watched by Stewart, by the way, to allow of this), sent in a good one, and thereafter another corner was given away by McCartney. A capital run by the leaders was rendered of no avail by Watkins sending high over, and Birch dispatched the ball over the line with a long try. Thomson was hurt as a result of colliding with Gallacher, and though he resumed in a little while he was ultimately compelled to retire from the field. A lovely centre by Ekins was not turned to account, and then Coupar was punished for kicking at Hodgkinson, though it seemed that the latter was far more to blame than the little Lutonian. More fouling was witnessed, this being for the most part indulged in by the Southampton contingent. The exchanges were not nearly so well worth watching as those before the interval, for the players slowed down considerably. Minor decisions in large number were awarded to either side; but nothing of first-rate importance transpired, and the result of an unsatisfactory second half was that nothing more was scored. The Lutonians accordingly secured a highly meritorious victory with the following figures:—

LUTON, THREE; ST. MARY'S, NONE.