

THE UNITED LEAGUE.

LUTON TOWN. v. MILLWALL.

Played at Luton on Saturday. Result:—

Millwall	3 goals
Luton Town	2 goals

The teams were as follow:—

RIGHT.		LUTON TOWN.		LEFT.	
		Williams (goal).			
Davies				McEwen.	
Watkins		Stewart.		Docherty.	
Gallacher.	McInnes.	Galbraith.	Coupar.	Ekins.	
O					
Geddes.	Davies	Gettiss.	Calvey.	Whelan.	
Mathews.		King.		Aitken.	
	Robson.		Graham.		
		Moore (goal).			
LEFT.		MILLWALL.		RIGHT.	

Referee, Mr. A. G. Kingscott; linesmen, Messrs. J. H. Hackett (Luton), and O. Caygill (Millwall).

All Football players are particularly requested to note that the best and most reliable football boots are to be procured at Freeman, Hardy, and Willis, 38, George-street, Luton, who are the largest boot retailers in the kingdom. Over 250 branch establishments. All kinds of walking, shooting, cycling, tennis, and other boots and shoes.—[ADVT.]

Defeated, but not disgraced! Such must be the verdict of the Luton supporters in regard to Saturday's match. If there were any such thing as luck I should say that Millwall had all there was knocking about, that the homesters couldn't get a smell of it, and that the consequence was that the Dockers ran off with the two points that properly belonged to Luton.

Moral victories don't count for much in football, but if ever a team were entitled to lay the flattering unction to the soul, that team was Luton on the occasion which I am just about to deal with. They had fully three-parts of the play, they proved themselves by far the cleverer men, as far as their feet were concerned, and the only thing the Dockers surpassed them in were coolness and judgment, and coolness and judgment won the day.

But before going any farther into the merits of the game, let me just say a word as to the surrounding circumstances. Not only was this the first meeting of the two teams, but it was their first match in the United League, and it had naturally been looked forward to with the greatest amount of interest by the adherents of both clubs. Precisely what view of the chances was taken at Millwall I cannot say, but certainly at Luton people were not hopeful—not nearly so hopeful as on the occasion of the first battle last year.

To a certain extent this might have been because Luton never had beaten the Dockers in a League match, the nearest they had come to it being at Millwall the season before last, when they led until within half-a-minute of the call of time, Jones then equalising with the very last kick of the game. Even people who disbelieve altogether in what is called luck, must admit there was something very much like it on that occasion, and at different times and in different ways, the East Ferry-road men seem to have been the happy recipients of Dame Fortune's golden smiles.

Some folks, with more force than logic, argued that Luton never had won a League match and never would, while others had a greater show of reason for their want of faith in the assumption that inasmuch as the homesters had not been displaying any particularly brilliant form against less formidable rivals, they were not likely to distinguish themselves when greater demands were made upon them.

Despite their misgivings, however, the people of Luton were terribly anxious to see the "grate fite," and the question of whether the fixture would be favoured with a fine day was discussed with almost as much earnestness as the match itself. Zadkiel, Old Moore, and other eminent authorities were consulted with alarming frequency during the early part of the week, and I am informed that on Saturday morning several persons spent the whole of their time in tapping the barometer, in order to ascertain whether rain or sunshine was the more likely to follow the gloom which prevailed.

All doubts were set at rest soon after midday. The rain began to come down in real earnest, and it continued with but slight intermissions throughout the whole of the afternoon. It kept the fine weather footballers away, but it had no effect whatever on the enthusiasts, who came from near and from far. Three hundred were brought down from Millwall, about 150 came from Hitchin in brakes, fifty or sixty came from St. Albans, and a number of others from Harpenden, Dunstable, etc.

The grand stand was speedily packed, a good many persons sought the friendly shelter of the pavilion, but the majority of people had to brave it out in the open, and notwithstanding the frequent downpours, they stood their ground without flinching. Altogether there could not have been far short of 4,000 spectators, a marvellous gate, considering the meteorological conditions.

The kick-off was timed for half-past four, and about ten minutes before that the Luton men were accorded a hearty cheer as they came on to the ground in all the glory of white shirts and blue knickers. The Dockers had their customary white knickers and blue shirts, and when the fellows got mixed it was an extremely difficult matter to tell one from which.

Mr. Saywell was to have refereed, but he had the misfortune to get a kick in a match in which he officiated at Leicester a few days before, and Mr. A. G. Kingscott, of Derby, therefore had an opportunity of making his bow for the first time to a Luton audience.

The visitors won the toss and elected to kick down-hill, but this was about the only advantage the choice of ends gave them. The start augured well for Luton, as they were immediately in evidence in the neighbourhood of the Millwall goal, operating first from the right and then from the left, but without effect. Then Galbraith received from Stewart, and put in a magnificent shot, which Moore saved at the expense of a corner.

Nothing tangible resulted from the kick, which was taken by Gallacher, but soon afterwards a foul throw-in by Matthews gave Davies—our Davies—an opportunity of showing his judgment in placing the ball, and he did it to a nicety, the leather drooping right in the mouth of goal, but eventually it was headed over the bar. Still Luton kept up the pressure, and a fine return by Docherty led to a desperate scrimmage—only that and nothing more.

Another foul throw-in by Matthews gave the Luton Davies a further opportunity of sending a message to Moore, and fouls against Gettins and Matthews followed, but Luton failed to take advantage of the tide which appeared to be flowing so strongly in their favour. The Dockers tried to turn the tables, but were each time pulled up by Davies, who was showing capital form at back.

McInnes had desperate hard lines in not bringing to a successful issue his attempt to convert a good centre by Ekins, Moore saving almost by the skin of his teeth, and the little 'un cleared a moment later from a shot by Galbraith. Luton were having all the best of the play, but they indulged their cleverness to too great an extent, and did not keep their eyes sufficiently concentrated on the main object—the goal.

If the Luton forwards had been just a little smarter in taking their opportunities at this juncture, they would have scored before the Dockers had succeeded in finding their feet, but they took too long in their efforts to secure a clear course and easy shots, and the Millwall defenders were usually able to nip in and rob them.

McInnes and Galbraith showed up with a neat bit of work, and Robson had to clear from Ekins' centre, while George, at his next attempt, put high over the goal. Hands against the Luton right back gave the visitors their first chance of getting a sight of the home goal, but they did not shine until a bad goal kick by Williams enabled Geddes to pass to his partner, Davies, and that player put in a beauty, which Williams saved well.

Once Gallacher, whose intentions were good, put in a tremendous shot, but as luck would have it, Robson happened to get in the way, and the ball rebounded off him. Hands against Luton gave their opponents a look-in, but McInnes cleared in splendid style, and he and Gallacher waltzed away to the other end, where Gallacher got in a good centre, but unfortunately there was no one there to take it.

Moore next had to save twice in succession from Stewart, whose second shot almost beat the custodian, and then the Dockers got away, and Calvey landed the ball in the net with a fine shot, just as he was given off-side. No sooner had the kick been taken, however, than Millwall were down again, and Davies scored with a beauty, almost before the Luton men had the least conception of their citadel being in danger.

This was after about half-an-hour's play, and it did seem tantalising to think that Luton should have been doing something like twenty-five minutes' attacking out of thirty, without anything to show for it, while the Dockers should take practically the first opportunity and score. Luton had had the play and Millwall had got the goal.

They were not left long in the enjoyment of their advantage, however, for Davies placed from a free kick for Luton, and Watkins' shot went over the goal as a result of coming into contact with one of the defenders. Gallacher placed the corner, and to the intense delight of the majority of the spectators Stewart headed into the net, making the scores equal, at which they remained when half-time was called. A grand shot by Ekins deserved to score, but Moore saved by giving a corner, and this was not improved on.

Considering the fact that during this half operations had been almost exclusively confined to Millwall territory, there is no doubt that Luton ought to have obtained a substantial lead, and thus have made the game safe, but though they were always hovering in the vicinity of the Millwall goal, their attack seemed to lack sting, and Graham and Robson for the most part were easily equal to the demands made upon them.

The Luton forwards did not shoot often enough or hard enough, and too frequently they allowed their opportunities to slip away in fruitless endeavours to get still better ones. Of course, they did have hard lines. The Millwall defenders sometimes appeared to get in the way of the ball by the merest accident, but it was more often because the men who were attacking dallied too long in taking their shots.

* * *

The spectators, however, were still pretty confident. Luton now had the advantage of the ground, and it was thought this would enable them to turn their efforts to better account. A foul against Stewart placed the home goal in jeopardy, King kicking and McEwen nearly heading through, but Williams cleared by giving a corner. Whelan placed nicely, and Calvey put in a beautiful header, from which another corner resulted, but this was placed behind.

* * *

Then Ekins got in a good run and a splendid centre, Robson clearing by kicking behind, while Stewart headed wide from the corner-kick. Again Luton attacked, and though Ekins put in a desperate sprint, he was just a quarter of a second too late to reach the ball, as it lay in the mouth of the Millwall goal, and Moore averted the danger by giving a corner, which Ekins placed behind.

* * *

A little later, McInnes forced another corner, and Gallacher placed, but the Dockers cleared, and taking advantage of the fact that the whole of the Luton team, bar Williams, were down the field, they trundled the ball along, with none to say them nay, though in the end they had to be content with a corner. Luton responded through the instrumentality of Davies, and Ekins was responsible for a lovely shot, which Moore saved, but directly afterwards Millwall had to give a corner. Ekins placed, and the ball ran along the cross-bar, but even then the Dockers cleared.

* * *

Gettins was getting into trouble with the referee, being pulled up for infringements of one sort or another with a frequency that must have been sadly trying to his temper. After all Luton's attacking, the Millwall forwards now got a clear run, the three inside men going up the field in a bunch. Stewart ran back and overtook them just against goal, and Williams ran out to clear, but he kicked the ball on to a Millwall forward—Calvey—and it rebounded into the net.

* * *

Thus the Dockers were once again given the lead, after seeing their opponents have practically all the play. Notwithstanding this misfortune, however, the homesters continued to put in some good work, and after a grand shot by Galbraith had been intercepted by Robson, the Luton forwards made a capital combined attempt on the Millwall citadel, but Graham deliberately hacked Coupar, and a free kick was awarded.

* * *

Docherty placed, and receiving again, dropped nicely into the mouth of goal, Gallacher rushing across from his side and almost making a hole in the net with a tremendous shot. The spectators positively shouted with joy, and several of the Luton players tried to dance hornpipes, but alas, alas, the demonstrations were brought to a premature close by the referee's decision that Gallacher was off-side. Still Luton acted on the aggressive, and Moore gave a corner to a good shot from McInnes.

* * *

Gallacher placed, and Stewart got in a regular stinger, but the ball rebounded off one of the Millwall backs, and Gallacher, with a splendid opening, shot high over the top. Then the visitors responded, and Gettins put in a fine shot at the Luton goal, but Williams saved in capital style. The homesters again went down, Coupar and Ekins doing the trundling, and Ekins sent just wide, but a minute later Watkins put in a beauty, which Moore splendidly negotiated.

* * *

A foul against King was followed by a long shot from Gallacher, which missed the mark by inches, and then Watkins indulged in a little gallery play with Geddes, the result being that the Millwall man got round him and centred almost from the goal-line. Three of the Millwall forwards were waiting to receive the ball, and there was not a single Luton man near. The consequence was that Whelan was able to score with ridiculous ease—in fact he seemed half ashamed of undertaking the job.

* * *

The visitors were certainly made a present of this goal, and their success at almost every time of asking had a visibly disheartening effect upon the Luton team, who for a time were hopelessly demoralised. The Millwall forwards now threatened the home goal again and again, all the defenders, with the exception of Davies and Williams, fairly playing into their hands, but happily no further disaster occurred.

* * *

Then taking heart of grace again, Luton returned to the attack, Galbraith and Coupar making a grand rush, and Coupar finishing up with a clinking shot, which Moore saved. Gallacher lost an opening the next minute by slipping over at the critical time, but was subsequently able to centre, and in the scrimmage which followed, the ball actually rolled up against the posts. It seemed that Luton were not to get another goal, but a moment later Gallacher once again placed the ball, and Ekins getting clear, beat Moore with a good shot.

* * *

Enthusiastic cheering greeted this performance, and though only two or three minutes remained for play, it seemed not unlikely that Luton after all would succeed in equalising, as they forced a couple of corners almost immediately. But the Dockers cleared from these and subsequent attempts, and when the whistle blew, they were left the winners by three goals to two, a verdict which affords no indication whatever of the state of the play, being simply the reward, not of superior skill, but of sound judgment.

* * *

A very tangible proof that the play was all in Luton's favour, is to be found in the fact that the homesters had no less than eleven corners, while only three were given to their opponents. As far as general attack was concerned, there was in the first half only one team in it, and with the exception of one brief period, Luton had by far the best of the exchanges in the second moiety.

* * *

But Luton were out-generalled by their opponents, whose defenders played the proper game, and never could be induced to desert their positions. The homesters, on the other hand, were all too eager to take part in the attack, the result being that on the few occasions when the Millwall forwards were able to break away, they had almost a clear field. The half-backs, too, as a rule placed the ball too far in front of the forwards, and by this means Graham and Robson had any number of free kicks.

* * *

My own personal opinion is that the Luton forwards wasted a good deal of their strength at critical times by distributing themselves over too wide an area, and that in their attempts upon goal they depended too much upon pure skill, instead of going for it bald-headed and forcing themselves through by hook or crook. The half-backs generally were too close on the heels of the forwards for really effective work, and McEwen at back spoiled his own play by endeavouring to fill the gap left by the halves.

* * *

Of course, if goals did not count, I should say the Luton team were streets ahead of their rivals, as they undoubtedly were in general play. As it was, they proved themselves cleverer men with their feet, they worked indefatigably, and their non-success was attributable only to errors of judgment, errors which may be corrected before the next encounter. They deserve credit for their efforts, and this credit will I hope be forthcoming from their supporters.

* * *

Speaking individually, I should say McInnes and Galbraith were the best men among the forwards, Coupar also played a good game, and the same may be said of Gallacher, though I have seen him perform better. Ekins was not up to the mark, but perhaps that was his misfortune rather than his fault.

* * *

Of the half-backs, Stewart certainly put in the largest amount of work, but it is a question whether Docherty did not play the more correct game. Watkins has not yet got into his last season's form. McEwen at back was a little too excited to be seen at his best, and though he did some first-rate work, he was too often tempted to leave his place.

* * *

Last week, I said that though I was confident Davies had any amount of ability, I had my doubts as to whether he would be speedy enough to cope with the men opposed to him. By his play on Saturday, he completely justified my opinion as to his ability and dissipated my doubts. From first to last he played a splendid game, tackling, kicking, and placing with wonderful judgment, and his performance could hardly have been improved upon even by the great McCartney himself. Williams acquitted himself pretty well in goal, and he probably had no real chance against any of the shots that scored.

* * *

As to the visitors, honours rested chiefly with Moore and Graham, both of whom showed grand form. Robson also played well, and the half-backs gave a capital account of themselves. Gettins is worth a Jew's eye to the forwards. He is not remarkably brilliant, perhaps, but he drives straight ahead, and takes a lot of shifting when once on the ball. The inside men, Davies and Calvey, are also good and useful workers, especially Davies, and Whelan, for his size, is a marvel. Geddes did not show to much advantage, and apart from the attention he received from Watkins, I doubt whether he is as good a man as some of the other forwards.

* * *

Mr. Kingscott gave the greatest satisfaction as referee, his decisions being prompt and generally pretty correct. He didn't miss much either.

* * *

I may say that he was considerably astonished by the form shown by both teams, expressing the opinion that either lot could hold their own on their own ground against any Second Division club. He attributed Millwall's victory to the brilliant performance of Moore in goal, but at the same time thinks the elevens are so well matched that it would be difficult at any time to predict the winners. Just one other word. Mr. Kingscott,