



English Cup.—Competition Proper.

LUTON v. WEST BROMWICH ALBION.

A GRAND STRUGGLE AND UNLUCKY DEFEAT FOR LUTON.

The attention of footballers for miles around was concentrated on Saturday on the great fight between Luton and the Throstles in the English Cup. Luton this season entered the competition proper over the heads of 1st Scots, Marlow, and Tottenham Spurs, and were again drawn against a First League team at home. Their last experience in the same line was with Preston North End, who with Middlesborough Town and Middlesborough Ironopolis, can also claim to have vanquished Luton at this stage of the Cup tournament.

I need not enlarge on the superior attractiveness of the West Bromwich Albion Club over all other Northern teams that have visited Luton in years past. Suffice it to say, that intense interest was manifested in their visit by the record attendance of 6,000. The central portion of the grand stand was numbered for reserved seats at half-a-crown, and this profitable idea was duly appreciated all round. Of course, Luton only take half of the "gate" receipts, but as these amounted to £184 15s., over £50 in excess of previous figures, the local club's coffers receive a substantial and none the less welcome contribution.

The day was dull and cheerless. The ground had been cleared of snow on Friday, and this disclosed a stretch of ice at the lower end which had to be carefully sanded. The vigorous thaw of Saturday soon inaugurated the reign of mud and slush, and when Mr. Kingscott, the referee, inspected the surface, he little relished the prospect before himself and the 22 artistes. However, it was pronounced fit for a Cup tie. While the Red Cross band were whiling away the tedious wait with dulcet strains, the crowd anxiously watched W. J. Bassett, the great International, taking some preliminary kicks to test his foot. Ultimately, "Billy" decided to play the part of a spectator, and it was, at first, doubtful whether Dean or McLeod would take his place, though the latter did so in the end. The only other change was the substitution of Horton for Evans at back. The Luton men received an ovation on entering the field some minutes before their opponents, the absence of Ekins necessitating the appearance of Birch. Just after 3, the men lined up:—

Luton: Williams; McCartney and McEwen; Davies, Stewart, and Docherty; Gallacher, Coupar, Galbraith, McLunes, and Birch.

West Bromwich Albion: Reader; Horton and Williams; Perry, Higgins, and Banks; McLeod, Flewitt, Cameron, Richards, and Watson.

The linesmen were Messrs. Carpenter (Leicester) and Davies (Marlow).

There was nothing in the toss, and when the ball was started, it was to a lively tune. The Albion got away first, but only gave Luton a goal-kick. Then, urged on by the crowd, the local forwards retaliated briskly, and Reader was called upon by a very fine shot from Coupar, Birch being afterwards given offside. From a free-kick for hands, McEwen landed the ball in the net untouched. This was promising, but something more substantial seemed in store when Gallacher dashed down his wing, and Williams badly fouled Coupar. Unluckily, Davies placed high over the bar, and a disappointed "Oh!" went up from the crowd.

pointed "On! went up from the Albion right wing next showed up with some clever play, but Luton soon had another opportunity from a foul on McInnes. This free-kick also went wide, and after Reader had kicked out, the Throstles woke up, but a couple of corners availed them nothing. Luton replied splendidly, and a glorious cross-shot from Gallacher was fisted out a few yards by Reader; amid breathless excitement, McInnes dashed up, but, alas! an apparently certain score came to nought, for his shot grazed the bar, and bounced over the net.

The Albions seemed to give up in despair the ordinary forward game, and so, after 18 minutes play, Flewitt made a single-handed rush upon Williams' charge — everybody shouted "Off-side!" but while the backs appeared to hesitate the custodian seemed doubtful, the West Brom forward broke through and banged the ball into the far corner of the net at short range. The score was a great surprise to one and all, but both referee and linesmen were agreed that it was legitimate.

As luck would have it, Gallacher made a fine sprint directly afterwards and presented Birch with the chance of a life time, clean in front of Reader. But the spectators groaned with vexation as "Ied" missed altogether. The locals struggled manfully and Williams who had kicked out a certainty from Gallacher, was again penalized for fouling, but Davies scored a bull's-eye untouched. For a time, Luton pressed continuously, and three corners came to their credit, though without improving their position. The home team were again within an ace of scoring, when Higgins handled close up. The hopes of Lutonians were once more disappointed when Docherty placed behind a foul against Banks. Half-time arrived with the score:—

WEST BROMWICH	..	1 goal
LUTON	..	0 ..

The ground was churned into an awful morass after a quarter of an hour's play and the men could scarcely keep their feet, while the ball almost refused to travel. So far, Luton had had by far the best of the game, and ought to have scored at least twice.

The home team resumed the conflict with unflagging vigour. McLeod broke away first and then McInnes ran down, but both excursions were checked for offside. The Luton forwards showed some beautiful combination, despite the mud, and their neat passing greatly taxed the Albion defence. Coupar and Gallacher made one particularly fine run, but Birch could do nothing right, and spoilt everything by shooting wide.

So the game went on, Luton having a big balance of the play in their favour, but no luck whatever near goal. Once Coupar all but scored, and McInnes nearly got on the spot before Reader could save another shot. The excitement of the crowd reached a high pitch when the Albion keeper left his goal, and but for a lucky clearance by Williams, Luton must have scored.

Fairly beaten in play, the Albion had resort repeatedly to very foul tactics, Coupar being badly "kneaded" and McEwen hurt for a few minutes. In the hope of improving matters, Birch and Galbraith changed places, and "Ted" was not long in giving Reader a warm handful. In the last quarter of an hour, the Albions were desperately pressed and were kicking anywhere and everywhere to save their goal. Luton had quite half-a-dozen free-kicks awarded them in succession, but over-anxiety and bad luck combined made all efforts fruitless. So it was that time brought the disappointing result:

WEST BROMWICH	..	1 goal
LUTON	..	0 ..