

THE UNITED LEAGUE.

LUTON TOWN v. WOOLWICH ARSENAL.

Played at Luton on Saturday. Result:—

Luton Town 5 goals.

Woolwich Arsenal 2 goals.

The teams were as follow:—

Right. LUTON TOWN Left.

Williams (goal).

McCartney

McEwen.

Davies.

Stewart.

Docherty.

Gallacher.

Coupar.

Galbraith.

McInnes.

Ekins.



Russell.

O'Brien.

Cale.

Haywood.

Brock.

McAvoy.

Anderson.

Crawford.

Giddwell.

Sinclair.

Leather (goal).

Left. WOOLWICH ARSENAL. Right.

Referee, Mr. J. O. Tillotson; linesmen, Messrs. F. W. Beardsley (Arsenal), and E. Birch (Luton).

Cycling Stockings and Cycling Shirts! Specialities at Special Prices during the Sale that is now proceeding at M. Mares.—[ADVT.]

Of all the crowds that have assembled at Luton football matches, that which came together on Saturday was one of the largest, though not the largest. Everything was favourable to a big gate. The weather was all that could be desired, the teams engaged were two of the best in the South, and then additional interest was lent to the encounter by the very critical position in which the Championship of the United League stood, and still stands.

It was an extremely fortunate thing for the Luton committee that the excessive dampness of the first few days of the week gave place to bright sunshine and drying winds, for had it been otherwise, no League match could have been played on the new ground on Saturday. Even as it was, the pitch was far from perfect, and everyone now can see what a blunder has been committed in not having the ground properly drained.

Two excursions were run from London, and these brought down a large number of Arsenal supporters, some of whom found the time between their arrival and the commencement of the proceedings sufficiently long to get a little elevated. They got more elevated still when they reached the scene of the match. The committee had hoped to get the stand erected, and to charge a shilling for admission thereto. But when the Arsenal people got on the ground they found only the skeleton of the stand, and this they speedily took possession of, despite the warnings of the officials.

Very musically-inclined, too, were these individuals, and the period of waiting, which was not a very long one, was enlivened with the selections from the latest music-hall songs, accompanied on a concertina. The kick-off was timed for half-past four, which was late enough in all conscience, but the time passed by, and still the Arsenal players did not put in an appearance. It subsequently transpired that their train was late, and they did not arrive till a few minutes to five, when they were received with cheers and groans.

A start was then made, and Luton, winning the toss, elected to defend the Gasworks end, or rather, to attack the other. The ball had no sooner been set in motion than Luton made their way up the field, and Gallacher, receiving from Galbraith, placed right in front of the Arsenal goal. Ekins was there, and had the chance of a life-time, but sent the ball high over the top.

Luton attacked again, and after a centre by Ekins, several shots were put in, but in each case rebounded off the Arsenal defenders. Then the visitors got away, and Stewart gave a corner, but made amends by heading away from the kick by Russell. The ball was taken up and down with great rapidity, and after free kicks on either side, Luton broke away on the left. McInnes centred, and Gallacher scored the first goal five minutes from the start, a performance which, of course, was greeted with great cheering.

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But if the start was sensational, it was nothing to what was to follow. Luton immediately made another assault, and Docherty got in a beautiful shot, which Leather saved. The ball came out of the burly-burly to Stewart, who sent it back at a lightning pace, the leather running right up the Leather in goal, and going into the net before the custodian had time to realise what had happened. The enthusiasm of the local spectators was immense.

The Arsenal retaliated, and Williams gave a corner to a shot from Russell, but neither this nor one which followed was turned to account. A foul was next given against Galbraith, though it certainly seemed that Anderson was the culprit, and Caldwell placing, Williams saved beautifully. Ekins created a diversion, and tested Leather with a smart shot, but the Arsenal were quickly down again, and but for the grand work put in by Davies, there was not knowing what might have happened.

The visitors, who were playing a surprisingly good game, still acted on the aggressive, but Williams was in very fine form, and one save he made when the men were pretty well on top of him was a particularly brilliant achievement. Gallacher then put in a good run and a nice centre, but McInnes headed on to Galbraith, who was off-side.

A bad piece of work by an Arsenalite, who fouled Docherty, and then kicked McInnes, let Luton in, and McInnes, obtaining from McEwen, had a capital chance, but failed to beat Leather. The Arsenal responded, but were driven back, and Gallacher centreing, received again from Galbraith, and scored with a long high shot, which the goal-keeper ought to have saved.

Luton were thus three up, after only twenty-five minutes' play. For some time after this, Luton had rather the best of matters, and eventually Coupar scored a fourth goal with a splendid long, low shot, which passed inside just against the post. He had very neatly taken his chance, while Anderson was trying to keep Galbraith off the ball.

Subsequently, Williams effected a magnificent save, but a moment later, was beaten by Haywood, who, however, was off-side. That was the last chance the Arsenal had before the interval, the play during the remaining few minutes favouring Luton. No further scoring took place, however, and the homesters crossed over with the substantial lead of four goals.

I should be glad to draw a veil over the second half, for there was very little during that portion of the game which reflected credit on Luton. Whether or not the men had made up their minds that there was no further need to trouble, and that they might as well save themselves for Monday, I cannot say, but certain it is they let the little Arsenal forwards fairly make rings round them.

They also fouled their opponents with most irritating frequency, and if they had made up their minds to give the Arsenal as many free kicks at goal as possible, they could hardly have gone a better way to work. Had the shooting of the visitors not been execrably bad, it is doubtful whether Luton would have maintained their advantage to the end.

As it was, Williams tipped over the bar a beautiful shot from Haywood, and saved grandly from a header by the same player, who got his opportunity from a centre by Brock. But still, luck favoured Luton, for McCartney, after dispossessing O'Brien, centred, and the ball going off Sinclair to Ekins, the latter put on a fifth point with a lovely shot.

After this, Luton very seldom became dangerous, the visitors having nearly all the play, and even when O'Brien hurt himself, and had to be carried off the field, it did not make any difference, a fact which shows into what a wretched state the Luton team had dropped. Poor O'Brien had a clear run when he injured himself, but just as he shot he fell to the ground, and it was discovered that he had twisted his ankle.

The four forwards were all too many for Luton at this stage, however, and soon Haywood scored a goal, which, though it appeared to be a rank off-sider, was allowed, whilst just before the finish, from a centre by Russell, Brock put on another point, Stewart by a mis-kick, helping the ball on its way.

If I could restrict my observations to the first half, I would say that Luton played a fine game, and gained a glorious and well-merited victory. The

defence was very sound, and the forwards were dashing and dangerous. But to see them in the second half, it was almost impossible to believe that the team was the same.

Chief honours, perhaps, belonged to Davies, who was in champion form, and Stewart likewise played a sterling game, with Docherty not far behind. McEwen did plenty of good work, but McCartney, though he played well at first, was totally unlike the McCartney of the previous week, and the very heavy charging in which he indulged would have spoiled any exhibition. Williams shone with remarkable brilliancy in goal, and Luton's victory was as much due to him as to anybody.

The forwards were much of a muchness, good individual work being shown, but not much combination. The Arsenal forwards played very much prettier football, and perhaps it was more their misfortune than their fault, that it did not come off. In the first half, Russell performed wonderfully well, but in the second half it was the right wing which nearly always threatened danger. The men are little, but fast and tricky, with any amount of pluck. I had never before seen them to so much advantage.

McAvoy did some very clever work at half-back, and Crawford was as earnest as ever, but Anderson spoiled his play by foul tactics. The backs played a very fair game, but Leather was not great in goal.

Luton are now only two points behind Millwall, and as they have a match in hand, there is very little in that, especially as their goal average is very vastly superior to that of the Dockers. The fact that the latter were beaten by Sheppey United on Saturday in a Southern League match by four goals to one, shows that they are not likely to go through their remaining matches without defeat. The following is the League table up-to-date:—

					Goals.	
	Pl'd.	Won	Lost	Dr'n.	For	Agst. Pts
Millwall Athletic..	10	7	2	1	32	20 15
Woolwich Arsenal	12	6	3	3	27	27 15
Luton Town.....	9	6	2	1	33	12 13
Rushden	12	5	6	1	23	31 11
Loughborough....	8	4	3	1	20	19 9
Wellingborough ..	11	3	6	2	16	33 8
Kettering	10	1	6	3	14	21 5
Tottenham Hotspur	8	1	5	2	17	19 4

The "Leader" says:—"There is no doubt about the fact that Luton at the present time are a very thick lot, and probably superior to any other eleven in the South. I am careful to say 'at the present time,' for the form of our Southern Clubs is very variable this season, and one can only speak from week to week, so to speak. We know, of course, that Millwall beat Luton at home and away in the United League, but many things have happened since then, and amongst them a vast improvement in the Redford men and a rather sad lapse on the part of Millwall. The struggle for United League honours is a desperate one, and after Saturday's sensational win, I fancy Luton will be slight favourites."

I think my reader will agree that I am not in the habit of blowing my own trumpet, but when the United League is described as the "popular movement" brought about chiefly through the instrumentality of "The Leader," it perhaps is time to protest. It was I who first broached the subject, and it was I who laid the foundation by obtaining the views of the Clubs concerned. After that, I invited and received the co-operation of "Rover," who, I am glad to acknowledge, gave the project very valuable support. But if any credit at all is due in the matter, "Plait" need not be in such a hurry to take it out of his own town.