

LUTON v. LOUGHBOROUGH.

A NARROW WIN.

Another stage was reached in the exciting struggle for the United League championship on Saturday, when Loughborough visited Luton to dispute the possession of two valuable points. The "Luffs" came here last Boxing Day on a "friendly," and most folk will remember the lively game that was played, resulting in a hard-won victory for Luton by 3 goals to 1. The occasion was memorable as the formal opening of the new ground, of which a full report appears elsewhere, and the ceremony attracted a great crowd, the grand stand being seated to its almost full capacity of 900.

The speech-making over, the Duke of Bedford gave the ball the kick preliminary, and both teams were speedily at work. Having the advantage of a cross-breeze, Luton forced the pace, and the exchanges were of a lively tune for some time. The first free-kick was "hands" in Luton's favour, and from Docherty's place Coupar unluckily headed out instead of in, though a corner resulted. Both Ekins and Gallacher shot over the bar in turn. Loughborough's look-in came from a foul against Galbraith, when their left wing dashed down the field and Williams cleared his first shot from Brailsford. Ward came away again, but was ruled offside.

The skill of Monteith in the visitors' goal was far above the ordinary, and McLanes tested him with a beautiful high shot, which he fisted out just beneath the bar. It seemed as if Luton must score when a hot shot from Stewart was cleared with difficulty, and a foul followed dangerously close to the Loughborough goal. The home team, however, had no luck, and from Docherty's shot Monteith had to run right out of goal, while another foul to Luton enabled Gallacher to shoot with tremendous force, but the ball perversely "cannoned" away.

Loughborough now gave the first glimpse of pretty combination, though it was nullified by offside play, and Luton returned to the attack, Monteith having to be wonderfully smart to save from Galbraith, and Gallacher hitting the far post a resounding smack. The home club were pressing hard, but fickle Fortune withheld her favour. Of course, the "Luffs" were defending splendidly, or the onslaughts of the home forwards must have spelt ruin.

Another dash by Luton saw Galbraith and McLanes foremost in a scrimmage, and everyone thought there was no need for further worry when Ekins banged in a beauty—alas! someone happened to be in the way, and the Loughborough citadel still remained intact. After Roulston had given Williams an easy handful, Luton forced two corners in succession, but scoring seemed hopeless. Eventually a foul, followed immediately by "hands," was given in Luton's favour close up; McCartney placed the kick, and the ball went through a forest of legs before Monteith could recover himself. There were naturally great rejoicings when Luton thus scored their first and only goal after 38 minutes' play, though the visitors did not half relish it.

Loughborough did their utmost to retaliate, and Ward showed such uncalled-for vigour at McCartney's expense that Mr. West had to administer a mild caution. The home team then made a promising run down the field, McLanes heading the excursion, and Gallacher tried a grand shot, which must have scored had not Coupar, who was in an offside position, touched the ball and spoilt what seemed a certainty. A final rush by Loughborough was cleared by McEwen, and the score stood at half time:—

LUTON, 1 goal.
LOUGHBORO, 0.

LUTON, 1 goal.
LOUGHBORO, 0.

The game was continued vigorously after the interval, and Williams saved a troublesome "grounders" from Brailsford. The home forwards broke away, and when on the point of converting a nice centre from Gallacher, Ekins was knocked off the ball by the backs. A stoppage was necessitated by an injury to Hamilton, who turned a complete somersault in mid-field. The visitors were by no means done with, and Andrews found Williams further employment. Luton were now playing well, but three or four free-kicks did not improve things, though McEwen landed the ball in the net untouched. Ekins was doing some effective work, but Galbraith nullified it by a foul on the goal-keeper.

Both sides were defending most successfully, and it was decidedly not a "day out" for either of the forward lines. Gallacher was trying hard, and twice skimmed the bar. It was, however, a bit of an "eye-opener" for the crowd when Brailsford broke clear and Jones had only Williams to beat, loud cheers being given as "Dick" saved by conceding a corner.

It was not a day for goal-getting, so the Fates had decreed. Loughborough attacked with spirit, and Luton responded to the challenge, Ekins making a fine run, but the shooting was all awry. Hamilton was very rough on McInnes, and a free-kick was awarded within 15 yards of Monteith. The place was taken by Davies, but nothing resulted, and McCartney had to be very smart to defend his own goal in a warm scrimmage. Luton again had terribly hard lines close to the visitors' goal, where from another foul on McInnes. Galbraith headed wide.

The disappointing absence of goals spoilt all the attractiveness of the play, and things were very tame at times. However, Williams had to save from a rush by the Loughboro' forwards, while Monteith was called upon twice before the finish, when Luton had satisfactorily "bagged the brace":—

LUTON, 1 goal.
LOUGHBOROUGH 0.

The teams were:—

Luton: Williams; McCartney and McEwen; Davies, Stewart, and Docherty; Gallacher, Coupar, Galbraith, McInnes, and Ekins.

Loughborough: Monteith, Blackett, and Thomson; Mumford, Hamilton, and Shelton; Roulson, Andrews, Brailsford, Jones and Ward.