

LUTON TOWN v. KETTERING.

THE "STRIPE" DEFEATED.

On Monday the Lutonians travelled into Northants. to play their return fixture with Kettering. The start was fixed very late (5.15) in order to enable the operatives in the shoe factories an opportunity of attending. Kettering had some new men in their team, while the injury to McEwen necessitated some sorting up of the Luton forces. Gallacher was able to resume, so that there was a full forward string, and Perrins was introduced at right-half. There was but a fair attendance, and the weather was wretched, a cold wind sweeping strongly from one end of the ground to the other.

Mr. T. Saywell was the referee, and the sides were:—

Luton: Goal, Williams; backs, McCartney and Davies; half-backs, Perrins, Stewart and Docherty; forwards, Gallacher and Coupar (right), Galbraith (centre), McInnes and Ekins (left).

Kettering: Goal, Perkins; backs, Wallis and Draper; half-backs, Pell, Cowan and Atherton; forwards, Panter and Heskin (right), Allan (centre), Miller and Parker (left).

Luton linesman, Mr. E. Gibbs; Kettering linesman, Mr. C. Bullock.

Kettering won the toss which gave them the advantage of the wind. The home lot made their way down immediately after the start and sent wide, the ball in the next minute finding its way over the bar. A splendid opening presented itself to the "reds" just after, but off-side checked the locals. Davies cleared well when the enemy were attacking strongly and Williams effected a clever clearance from Panter, while the keeper kicked away a good one by Draper. Maintaining the pressure the Kettering men gave the visitors' rear-guard abundance of opportunities of distinguishing themselves, one of the best performances hereabouts being a valuable sample of head work by McCartney, following which Panter headed over the line. Neat play enabled Luton to advance and Gallacher shot hard; but Perkins and his comrades proved reliable. Hands against Kettering was unproductive, Perkins disposing of a good centre by Docherty. Davies put up well, only to see Gallacher handle the ball when in a good position. An abominable piece of foul play was indulged in by Draper, Coupar being the victim, and even the local spectators conceded that the back was much to blame. A further effort by one of the home backs was capitally dealt with by Williams, while the custodian effected a further excellent clearance from a header. Heskin was penalised for fouling Davies, following which a centre from Gallacher enabled Ekins to send in a stinger. Another magnificent shot from the Luton left winger fully deserved to score, but it was kept out with some difficulty by the goalkeeper. Gallacher was the subject of the unwelcome attentions of the home rearguard, and when the referee gave a free-kick there were loud expressions of dissent. The conduct of the crowd had, indeed, been disreputable, foul language being freely used. At length the bad behaviour became so noticeable that Mr. Saywell stopped the game and threatened to put an end to the match and have the spectators (who were not very numerous, by the way) turned off if their conduct did not improve. This was the signal for another outburst of hooting and groaning, and for some time afterwards the referee and the Luton players were almost continuously insulted. Following hands against Stewart the ball was sent through the Luton goal; but Mr. Saywell was of opinion that the Kettering man who last played the ball was off-side, a decision which gave further umbrage to the spectators and was freely hooted. The strangers subsequently broke away, but hands against Gallacher served as a check. The right-winger just later tricked a couple of opponents cleverly and sent in a very hot attempt which travelled wide of the mark. A miskick by Davies let Kettering in; but the aim of the attacking force was not reliable, and the ball found its way over the net. Gallacher and McInnes had free-kicks awarded against them for off-side and hands respectively, while Williams gave a further admirable display when hard pressed. What appeared to be a mistake by the referee was noticed soon after. Williams, in saving, tipped the leather over.

the bar, whereat Mr. Saywell gave a goal-kick, a decision which was palpably wrong and which evoked more expressions of disapprobation. The only other points of interest prior to the change of ends were some magnificent saves by Williams, who had given an exhibition which won admiration from even the Kettering crowd—than which praise could scarcely be higher. The wind had materially assisted the homesters; but the interval found the score-sheet blank, thus:

LUTON, 0; KETTERING, 0.

When it came to the turn of the Lutonians to play with the wind in their favour it was perceived that it had lessened considerably in force, so that the odds were largely in favour of the home players, who had been enabled to attack hotly in the first half whereas the visitors had for the most part been engaged in defending. The downfall of the Luton goal came soon after the teams had re-started, this being the one mistake which could be laid to the charge of Williams throughout the game. Heskin scored when it seemed that the Luton keeper should have easily succeeded in keeping out the ball. The scoring of this point had a great effect on the ultimate result, for thereafter the homesters played with renewed dash and determination, while the visitors—who had played a remarkably good defensive game formerly—perceptibly fell off. The leaders threatened danger immediately after they had managed to score and though repulsed they returned to the attack without loss of time, off-side eventually stopping them. A brilliant shot by McInnes led to a corner, the opening being spoiled by a foul against Perrins. Following a free-kick Galbraith got off well, though only to be heavily charged off the ball. Ekins was nastily fouled and Docherty, in taking the free-kick, steered over the goal-line. The Luton left half just after collided violently with Heskin and the result of the impact was that he lost a tooth. Davies was responsible for a good place kick and Gallacher sent in well, only to see the leather returned down the field excellently. Hands against Kettering close to goal looked dangerous; but McCartney, who took the kick, managed to hoist the ball over the crossbar. Hereabouts Perrins and McCartney were pulled up for fouling, whereupon the Kettering onlookers changed their attitude and cheered the referee. A corner to the locals was unproductive, while Williams saved grandly from a free-kick against Davies for hands close to goal. Fine displays by the goalkeepers were noticed in turn. The Kettering men had much the best of the exchanges just now, and it must be confessed that in the second half they were considerably the better team. They forced three corners before the end, and later on Luton made a somewhat better show. Their efforts were of no avail, however, and the result was that they dropped a couple of League points most unexpectedly with the following scores:

KETTERING, 1; LUTON, 0.

On Saturday by beating the Hotspurs the local players entitled themselves to be placed at the head of the United League table, their lead over Millwall being on goal average. This is a triumphant answer to the captious criticism and ill-natured utterances which have been made of late from outside concerning the "stripes."

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I confess I was glad to see the homesters place these two points to their credit, even if it was only by a single goal. The explanation of the narrowness of the win is easily made when it is stated that McEwen was absent from the field for three quarters of the game.

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To have to face a team like the 'Spurs—admitting, of course, that they were below full strength—with ten men only is a tall order, and when it was discovered that "Mac" would be unable to resume some of us had feelings of disquietude. However, the defence was sorted up, and the men behaved gallantly. To score with a depleted front rank is an achievement of which they may well be proud.

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If one indulges in criticism just now it will not be violating the good advice tendered by Dr. McArthur last week, for the men have not lost recently. Yet it must be confessed that their victories have not been obtained so easily as their form would appear to warrant us expecting. No doubt many readers have felt the same as myself in regard to this.

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It is an undeniable fact that for some weeks past the attack has not been up to the customary standard of excellence. How it happens I am puzzled to say, for the men have shown flashes of individual brilliancy at times. The self-same remark was made by a Tottenham visitor on Saturday, who could not understand what was wrong with the forwards.

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Is it that they are a trifle stale? I sincerely hope not, for if it is so there is a bad look out for the remainder of the season. One recognises that the programme has been a severe and trying one, but let us hope that the staleness has not yet set in.

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Poor little McEwen! We all sympathised with him when he reluctantly retired and some of us thought one of the allusions by a Hotspur sympathiser particularly ill-placed. "Mac" took a light view of his strain and anticipated being back in his place in a few days; but I learn that the medical opinion is not so hopeful.

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Ekins was in something like his old form on Saturday, as the fact that he scored both the home goals will tend to prove. That run of his in the second half which terminated in the second goal was very fine, and the shot was worth the price of admission to witness. Nobody is more pleased than myself to see that George is returning to form.

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All the praise must not be lavished on the outside man, though, for a large measure is due to McInnes, who played a grand game. I am not sure, indeed, that he was not the best forward on the field, for his work was extremely effective if not so brilliant as that of his partner. He made admirable openings for more than one of his comrades, and it was not at all his fault that these were not accepted.

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Coupar commenced in a fashion that was not altogether admirable; but he brightened up later on, and in the second half did yeoman service. Galbraith, despite his sins of omission and the rest, also gave satisfaction after the interval.

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The halves were thoroughly reliable. Stewart and Docherty each performed prodigies of valour, while Perrins (who was at somewhat of a disadvantage through having his position altered once or twice) also did creditably.

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The backs were in fine form. McCartney was beaten more than once by Payne; but he played a splendid game all through. Davies opened the eyes of many by the scientific exposition which he gave in the rear. Williams had more work than usual, and for the most part he discharged it admirably.

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On the side of the 'Spurs Ambler was the same reliable custodian as of old, and he kept out some shots which would have beaten a less expert keeper with ease. The better of the backs was Allen, who played a very plucky game, his tackling being determined and his kicking excellent.

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Amongst the halves Stanley Briggs was most prominent. He amused the spectators by the persistency with which he stuck to Galbraith. He was guilty of one or two shady actions, but for the most part he played a scrupulously fair game. Crump was the better of the other pair.

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Of the forwards the right wing couple were most noticeable, and Newbigging was the better of the two. McElheney, with a persistency that must have been irritating to his club's supporters, invariably sent over the bar or beside it instead of under it, whereas his partner shot hard and straight. It was he who gave Williams most trouble. Payne was best of the remaining three.

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Mr. Tillotson was on the whole satisfactory with his decisions, though why on earth he disallowed the goal scored by McInnes after the interval I am at a loss to understand.

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There were a good many sympathisers with the 'Spurs on the grand-stand and these had numerous wordy passages with some excitable Luton partisans. These were always amusing, though as time wore on they became somewhat irritating. All this depreciation of opposing teams seems to me ludicrous.

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The locals have arranged a heavy programme for the Easter holidays. In six days there are five first eleven matches, two of them being League encounters. I am hoping that the local enthusiasts will turn out in full

force during the holidays and so give the executive the financial assistance they so much need.



Tuesday's match with Loughboro' will complete the League engagements of Luton. It is a very important game, and I am arranging that the result shall appear in the Easter special edition of this paper which is to be published on Tuesday evening under the title of the *Luton Echo*. Readers should look out for this, for the holiday football will be carefully reported.



Then the bazaar must not be forgotten. Of course all loyal supporters of the winter game in the district have made up their minds to patronise it. The appearances are very encouraging, and if only the football-loving public will rally to the support of the committee success is certain.



There will be no lack of amusements, apart from the attractions offered by the bazaar itself. Good music will be supplemented by charming tableaux and dramatic performances by capable exponents. Then Mr. Owen Way is to give selections, and the list will be filled up with variety shows and so forth. A pleasant hour or two can be passed at a reasonable rate, and I invite my readers to assist the club by being present.



It may interest some of my readers to become aware that amongst the men who are playing for Battlefield (the Easter Monday visitors) is W. Prentice, the erstwhile Luton forward.



The disastrous result of Monday's visit to Kettering is the more regrettable that it has led to a recrudescence of that carping which a certain section of folks are only too prone to indulge in. They cannot understand the reverse and refuse to accept what to those who witnessed the encounter are perfectly feasible explanations.



The game was one of the most unsatisfactory that I have witnessed for many a long day. Briefly, the loss of the toss represented the losing of the game. I see it is stated that Stewart won the toss and gave Kettering advantage of the wind, a statement which will be seen to be palpably absurd when it is said that the wind was blowing extremely strongly straight down the ground.



Some of us remember a certain cup-tie at Middlesbro' when the wind, which had been dead in the teeth of the Lutonians in the first half, was found to have calmed down when the second portion was entered upon. So it was on Monday, for the breeze which made it necessary for the visitors to defend almost entirely in the first portion of the match had greatly moderated when the time came for ends to be changed.



Let it be said that when thus fighting both the wind and the Kettering players the Luton men gave a very good display. True, the forwards were not quite up to concert pitch; but there was little to grumble at so far as the defenders were concerned.



The Kettering lot played a "neck or nothing" game and fouls were necessarily numerous. One or two of the "whites" lost their heads in the second period and imitated the unworthy example which had been set them—and they suffered for it. Draper was a particularly bad offender. His methods are well known, and on Monday he was at his worst.



The crowd was, for its numbers, absolutely the worst I have ever faced—and that is saying a good deal. Vile language and insulting remarks were addressed to the referee, players and Pressmen alike, and some of us were glad when the miserable affair was over. I confess that my fingers twitched once or twice; but one had to curb his temper or a ploughed fields chase might have been meted out to him.



At one stage the behaviour of the crowd was so bad that Mr. Saywell boldly informed them that if there was a continuance he would stop the game. This was but fuel to the fire, for the execration increased in intensity and hooting was general. There was an amusing change of front when the referee gave two or three decisions in favour of Kettering, and thereafter there was peace.



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 I frankly admit that Mr. Saywell made one or two mistakes, these rousing the ire of the beholders. One occasion was when Williams tipped the ball over the bar and a goal-kick was awarded. Of course this was an error; but it did not justify the use of the abominable language which one was compelled to listen to.

None of our visits to Kettering recently have been very happy, and this was the least enjoyable of all, save that we were not pursued across the fields to the station this time. The conduct of the crowd was vile on Monday, and I shall not be surprised if the referee reports it to the proper quarters. I am sorry to have to say that Mr. Saywell was not properly supported in coping with the crowd, the tendency being to make light of the obstreperousness.

Having made allowances for the visitors, who were terribly handicapped by the conditions under which they had to play, let me say that in the second half they were completely out of it. They were never really dangerous, whereas the winners were constantly attacking in the neighbourhood of the Luton goal.

The Luton forwards were quite off colour, though before the interval useful work was done by Gallacher, Ekins and McInnes, the last-named once more being the best of the bunch. The defence was not faultless, but it was good, and Williams gave a brilliant exposition. It was a vast pity that he allowed that shot to beat him.

Millwall by beating Wellingborough again took first place on the League table, and the general opinion seems to be that they will maintain it to the end. I am hoping, however, that the Arsenal will succeed in beating them, in which event we shall still have a chance, for both Luton and Millwall are pretty sure to go down at Loughborough.

The grudging appreciation which has been given by the London papers to Luton of late has in some directions changed now that defeat has come. Here is a sample: "The straw plaiters have been giving signs of deterioration of late, and have not found their new ground very lucky. This defeat sustained at the feet of Kettering, a club which has not been playing very well, may mean all the difference between victory and defeat for the straw-plaiters in the United League."

On Tuesday Kettering beat the 'Spurs by five to two at Kettering.

The League table on Tuesday stood thus:—

								Goals.		
	Played.	Won.	Drn.	Lost.	For.	Agst	Pts.			
Millwall.....	12 ...	9 ...	1 ...	2 ...	38 ...	21 ...	19			
Luton.....	12 ...	8 ...	1 ...	3 ...	36 ...	14 ...	17			
Arsenal ...	13 ...	6 ...	3 ...	4 ...	27 ...	31 ...	15			
Rushden.....	12 ...	5 ...	1 ...	6 ...	23 ...	31 ...	11			
Loughboro'..	10 ...	5 ...	1 ...	4 ...	24 ...	20 ...	11			
Kettering ...	12 ...	3 ...	3 ...	6 ...	20 ...	23 ...	10			
Wellingboro' ..	12 ...	3 ...	2 ...	7 ...	16 ...	36 ...	8			
Tottenham ..	11 ..	1 ...	2 ...	8 ...	21 ...	29 ...	4			

The Luton record on Tuesday was as follows: Played, 60; won, 44; lost, 9; drawn, 7; goals for 207, against 55.

The list of exempted teams for the qualifying competition of the English Cup is somewhat remarkable. On what grounds is Leicester Fosse included, seeing that the club has been eliminated from the competition two years in succession? Walsall is another extraordinary selection.