

FOOTBALL.

LUTON AND THE LEAGUE.

DEFEAT AT LINCOLN.

It will be remembered that on the only occasion prior to Saturday that the "stripes" had encountered the Lincoln City men, they succeeded in snatching a victory by two goals to none. This match was played at Luton, so that the visit of the Lutonians to the Lincolnshire capital on Saturday was not looked forward to with very confident feelings by those who have learned the lesson that one must not expect to win many Second League matches away from home. So well had the Luton men performed against Gainsboro' Trinity, though, that there was justification for entertaining the hope that they would go one better at Lincoln and notch two more League points. The Bedfordshire team set out in the morning on this their first visit to the city of "Great Tom," beneath the shadow of which the games are decided. They occupied a better position in the League table than their opponents, for whereas Lincoln had obtained but six points from 11 games, Luton had secured nine points in 10 engagements. There was a fair muster of spectators to witness the match, despite the wretchedly inclement nature of the weather. A strong wind was sweeping down the ground when the time came for commencing, and this carried a blinding shower of sleet and snow, while the turf was slippery in the extreme.

The teams were constituted thus:—

Lincoln: Goal, Wilkinson; backs, MacFarlane and Eyres; half-backs, Hannah, Morris and J. Simpson; forwards, Hall and Hulme (right), Robertson (centre), Fletcher and Ross (left).

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

Referee: Mr. Jefferies, Masboro'.

The fact that a stiff breeze prevailed rendered the winning of the toss a very important matter, for the likelihood was that the rule which applies to like circumstances—that the team which won the toss would win the game—would have one more illustration. Eyres, the home captain, was successful in the spin of the coin and naturally decided to kick with the wind at his back. The visitors broke away immediately after the start and threatened danger to the City goal on the right. A foul against the homesters further improved the position of the Lutonians, the ball being so well placed that the "stripes" were enabled to attack hotly. Hall secured possession and raced away to the other end, where McEwen gave away a corner in saving. The home outside right received from Morris and dispatched a shot which was only saved by the concession of another corner. Williams later on effected a smart clearance, while a foul against Luton on Ross was not productive of disaster. The strangers had the best of the exchanges for a space thereafter and the custodian was afforded an opportunity of distinguishing himself. Chances were neglected by the Citizens, and when a corner had been forced the homesters failed to secure anything more tangible than a flag-kick. Again Luton advanced in determined fashion and the keeper and the left back were called upon to clear, Stewart giving Wilkinson a particularly warm shot to negotiate. Following some midfield play fouls were awarded against either side; but the resultant free-kicks did not prove of much avail. MacFarlane sent out with a big kick when the "stripes" had got down well, McCartney following suit when the home left wingers became prominent. The visitors' right put in some neat play and were emulated by the City outside left, Davies pulling him up very smartly. More pressure by Lincoln led to the outside right being presented with a splendid opportunity, the goal apparently being left at his mercy. To the chagrin of the spectators, however, he shot wide. From the inside right came an attempt which had the effect of sending the ball spinning across the mouth of goal. Another attack by Luton was neatly stemmed; but Gallacher gave the defence some trouble with a fine effort. When the game was half an hour old the first success came to the locals, Morris beating Williams with a long-range shot. This necessarily tended to infuse additional spirit into the efforts of the homesters, and they gave the visitors a taste of their ability. The forwards performed admirably and it was not long ere the leaders had a capital chance of adding to their total. This was not accepted, though, the culprit being Hulme. The outside right narrowly missed with an attempt which travelled a bit wide, this being a very lucky escape for the strangers. The latter were not by any means dismayed, for they exerted themselves strenuously and to such good purpose that the custodian had to clear a hot one from Stewart. When the home lot had been beaten back once more, the local backs put in some very useful work, both being severely tested by the visiting forwards. Rallying to the attack the Lutonians made their way into opposition quarters yet again, and this time it was McInnes who miscalculated his distance and so sent over the line. When McCartney had saved from the inside left the outside man on the same wing secured and lowered Williams's colours with a shot which gave the keeper no chance whatever. Following a brief period of pressure by the "stripes," the homesters broke away and Williams was beaten for a third time, the inside right on this occasion succeeding in steering the ball through the keeper's legs. From a scrimmage the leather was again sent into the net; but the point was disallowed. A fourth suspicionless goal was obtained shortly after, however. There was no more scoring before the interval, when Lincoln held a very pronounced advantage with the following figures:

Lincoln, 4; Luton, 0.

With the wind in their favour in the second period, the "stripes" were expected to do themselves more credit and, though they could not succeed in wiping off the deficit entirely, they managed to reduce their opponents' lead by one half. For some time after the re-start the visitors had the best of matters, but at length the homesters got away in good style and the inside right gave Williams some trouble with a neat shot. Ekins afterwards sent wide; but the failure was not of much consequence, as off-side had been given. When the Lutonians had remained in the home half for some seconds the home centre broke away and passed to Hall, who sent in a capital attempt. Again Luton held the advantage in point of play for a space, the defenders being afforded numerous opportunities of displaying their capability. Off-side checked Robertson when he had got well under weigh and Gallacher dashed off at top speed to the home end, where he centred smartly. Little failed to get to the ball in time, though, and so nothing came of what was an admirable sample of play. The leaders pressed for a bit, after which the "stripes" returned to the assault, a foul against the home lot enabling the Lutonians to further encroach. The upshot, indeed, was that the custodian was called upon to clear, in doing which he presented his adversaries with a corner, from which the visitors' captain steered wide. Despite a decision for off-side when they had advanced well the Luton players did not lose heart. They continued to struggle gamely, and at length Gallacher succeeded in sending past Wilkinson. Mr. Jefferies was of opinion that he had infringed the off-side law, however, and so the point was not allowed to count—which was hard lines for the visitors, for the shot was a beauty. The custodian had hard work in saving when the centre half headed towards his own goal; indeed, he only did so by conceding a corner. From this Stewart sent in well, and another flag-kick accrued; on this occasion the leather went behind the goal-line. The operations continued to rule greatly in favour of Luton and at length Little beat Wilkinson. Again the referee decided against the scorer, and so the Luton sheet perforce still remained blank. A genuine goal came soon afterwards, though, Stewart being the executant. For a fourth time the ball was sent into the net from a free-kick; but the necessary second player had not touched it. The Luton men had very much the best of the subsequent exchanges and they managed to score again before the close, McEwen beating Wilkinson with a capital long-range attempt. The final score was:

LINCOLN, 4; LUTON, 2.

FOOTBALL FACTS AND FANCIES.

The Lutonians had all the worst of the luck at Lincoln, and one need not be surprised that they lost. Let us hope Dame Fortune will be more kindly disposed when the sides meet for the return match next week.

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The "stripes" had to face a strong wind and driving snow showers in the first half, and it was not to be expected that under such circumstances they should do especially well. The men did themselves credit, however, for they had a good share of the play.

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To score twice in the second portion after facing the wind for three quarters of an hour was a capital performance, and the Lincoln men may congratulate themselves that they got off as well as they did, for the losers attacked very strongly at times.

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Here is the way the *Daily Chronicle* referred to the game on Monday: "The Southern clubs again told a doleful tale in the Second Division, but the turn of the wheel makes the Arsenal a better side than Luton. The Reds were unlucky in losing by one goal to two at Leicester, but Luton were fairly beaten at Lincoln, although they scored the only two goals of the second half, by means of a half-back and a full-back!" A very unkind cut, especially after the flattering observations which have been proceeding from the same pen recently.

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The *Morning Leader*, in the course of its report, says: "There was nothing like the difference of four goals to none between the play of the teams, however, and it was just as well for the homesters that they had got so commanding a lead before Luton had the wind in their favour. One might have thought the visitors would have been dismayed at so large a total against them, but from the style they played in the second half they might have been the winning team. Though the Cits showed some rare bursts of fine play the visitors had by far the best of this portion of the game."

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The Lincoln papers speak highly of Luton, whose performance seems to have impressed them very favourably. Why, however, does one of the scribes indulge in a dissertation on the off-side law?

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Other games in the Second Division on Saturday were: Leicester Fosse 2, Arsenal 1; Grimsby 7, Loughborough 0; Small Heath 6, Walsall 0; Newcastle United 3, Gainsborough Trinity 1.

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The League table to Monday is:—

						Goals.			
	Plyd.	Won	Drn.	Lost		For	Agst.	Pts.	
Burnley.....	14	11	2	1	...	39	9	24	
Newcastle United	12	9	1	2	...	25	12	19	
Manchester City..	11	8	2	1	...	30	8	18	
Small Heath	12	8	1	3	...	25	19	17	
Grimsby Town ..	15	7	2	6	...	30	23	16	
Leicester Fosse ..	12	5	4	3	...	19	13	14	
Newton Heath ..	13	6	2	5	...	24	11	14	
Woolwich Arsenal	14	6	2	6	...	26	25	14	
Darwen	12	4	2	6	...	15	33	10	
Luton	11	3	3	5	...	16	22	9	
Loughborough ..	12	4	1	7	...	13	27	9	
Walsall	14	4	1	9	...	24	36	9	
Lincoln City	12	3	2	7	...	21	33	8	
Gainsboro' Trinity	11	3	1	7	...	20	28	7	
Burton Swifts....	11	2	1	8	...	14	26	5	
Blackpool.....	12	2	1	9	...	13	29	5	

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The "stripes", if somewhat unlucky in the English League, are going great guns in the United League. They have now completed half of their season's engagements in this competition, and so well have they performed that they have secured the maximum number of points in the eight games with a goal average of 28 against 3.

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It really looks as though we have a good chance this season of obtaining the championship which was so narrowly missed last season. It is true that Woolwich Arsenal have not yet lost a game; but they have only played three and have not yet met Luton. It is a question open to doubt whether the Arsenalites will snatch victories at Southampton and certain Northants. towns.

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The Lutonians are, on the other hand, doing especially well against the Northants. teams. Rushden and Wellingboro' have each succumbed twice, while Kettering has been defeated at Luton. It is worthy of note that the three goals obtained against Luton have been notched by Northants. players, the goal record against Northants. sides being: For 17, against 3.

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The team's record in the contest at this midway stage may be interesting. They have played eight games and won them all, with a goal average of 28 against 3. The results of the matches are: Wellingborough, home, 4-0; Wellingborough, away, 2-0; Tottenham 'Spurs, home, 5-0; Kettering, home, 3-1; Millwall Athletic, away, 4-0; Southampton, away,

Monday's game with Rushden resulted in the easiest possible of wins for the homesters, though at one time it seemed likely that the contest would be keenly fought. The play in the first half was of a very scrambling order, neither side doing itself justice.

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After the interval Luton, having secured the lead, settled down into better combination and presently the forwards made matters extremely lively for the Rushden defence. In this moiety Bailey, who had hitherto played in champion style, had palpably had enough of it.

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The ease with which the homesters won is the more remarkable when it is remembered that there were a couple of reserves in the ranks. Catlin was given a trial in the centre; but it cannot honestly be said that he was a great success in that position. Indeed, he was palpably out of place.

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After the interval Coupar went to the centre and Catlin was transferred to inside right. This change worked wonders; the combination improved vastly and Catlin seemed more at home, as was demonstrated by two of the remaining four goals falling to him.

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Though it was generally agreed that the reserve was not exactly suited for the centre position, it was conceded that with practice he would make a useful understudy for the regular occupant of the post. He evinced the possession of good judgment and plenty of pluck, which are essentials of the first order in a centre forward.

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One would prefer to dilate upon the display of the forwards in the second half and to lose sight of their show before the interval, which was exceedingly poor. There was six of one and half-a-dozen of the other in the sense of weakness; all were palpably out of it, and they floundered about in the mud in a way that we are not accustomed to from them. The surprising thing was that a class team could display such mediocrity.

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There was little fault to be found with the men after the re-start, though, and this is the more remarkable when it is borne in mind that in this period the wind was against them. They advanced repeatedly in determined fashion and their attacks were of the sturdiest. The way they peppered the "Rushers'" goal was a treat to witness.

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The extreme wingers were, perhaps, most conspicuous. Ekins put in one specially fine run, in the course of which he beat Bailey and Ambridge and brought about the capture of the Rushden citadel by a magnificent centre. If only for this feat the outside left would be deserving of commendation; but he was responsible for much useful service in addition to this.

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Gallacher was also in fine fettle. He has now recovered his old facility for centreing rapidly and accurately. His goal was a beauty, and I am hoping to see several more from the same foot in the next few matches.

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Stewart and Docherty shared the honours at half-back, with Perrins a good third. All did useful work. Stewart was weak in front of goal, which is quite a novel thing so far as he is concerned. I was glad to see Perrins do well.

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Both backs were safe as a rule, though once or twice both were badly beaten. Davies was in especially fine form. Williams made some wonderfully clever saves, and two or three times when a score seemed inevitable he performed particularly brilliantly.

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The Rushden custodian was smart, the backs and halves steady and fleet, and the forwards were a speedy lot. Denton at outside right impressed me especially.

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The League table is:—

	Goals							
	Plyd.	Won	Drn.	Lost	For	Agst.	Pts.	
Luton	8	...	8	...	0	...	0	...
Tottenham	5	...	3	...	1	...	1	...
Woolwich	3	...	3	...	0	...	0	...
Kettering	5	...	2	...	1	...	2	...
Wellingborough ...	10	...	2	...	1	...	7	...
Rushden	4	...	2	...	0	...	2	...
Southampton	4	...	2	...	0	...	2	...
Millwall.....	7	...	1	...	2	...	4	...
Loughborough	6	...	0	...	1	...	5	...

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On Monday the Lutonians journeyed to Kettering in the United League contest. I remember that it was at Kettering last year the Luton men came a cropper when the championship was within their grasp and when a victory was all that was needed to make it a certainty. But the Northants. lot ought not to be able to repeat that performance this year.

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Luton's record to date: Played, 24; won, 14; lost, 6; drawn, 4; goals for 57, against 34.

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Last week I drew attention to some very severe comments which appeared in the *Evening News* on the play of the Lutonians in the Tottenham match. Last Saturday's number contained a letter from Messrs. Neve and Beck, on behalf of the directors, stating that "we have proof before us that the suggestions made by you are entirely unfounded, and we have, therefore, on behalf of the directors, to ask that you will in this week's issue correct the false impression which your comments have created, as the directors cannot in the interests of the team allow the matter to pass unnoticed."

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In the same issue is a letter from the referee (Mr. Overton) in which that gentleman explicitly denies the allegations made against the Luton team. He writes "in justice to the Luton players," and surely his version must be accepted, for who so well able to judge as the responsible official?

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The writer says: "I cannot understand where you derived the materials for your remarks. You say 'he (the referee) cautioned Docherty three times.' I did so once only. His after play, though vigorous, was not rough. You say 'and McCartney twice.' Again, I did so once only, not for rough play, but for foul play. His play afterwards was scrupulously fair. You say 'Davies was also interviewed for striking Hartley.' I did not interview him, neither did he strike Hartley in the common acceptance of that term—i.e., with his fist. The collision between these players was a perfectly fair one, and whatever damage Hartley received was quite unintentional."

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"You say 'some of the Luton men had their names taken.' I took the names of McCartney and Docherty only. You write of the Hotspur goalkeeper as though his injuries were inflicted by a Luton man, but you do not definitely state that such was the case. If this charge also is brought against Luton I will supply the facts. When these corrections are made it is obvious that the play cannot fairly be described as rough, though, as might be expected from the importance of the occasion, it was strong on both sides."

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"Lastly, as regards myself, though this is quite a minor matter, and as far as I am concerned may be passed over in silence, you say 'Mr. Overton, when appealed to at the finish, admitted the foul tactics.' You have been greatly misinformed. No one appealed to me at the finish, and, consequently, I did not admit the foul tactics."

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The writer explains with whom he journeyed to London, and concludes as follows:—"Again, you call me 'inexperienced.' I may be unknown to your informant, but I am not inexperienced, certainly not inexperienced enough to talk to a stranger about a match in which I have just officiated. As a matter of fact I have had 22 years' experience of the game."

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There is the very best defence of the Luton team which could have been written, and it very effectually gives the lie to the mass of rubbish which has been appearing in certain prints. The criticisms in the *Evening News* were impossible of substantiation; indeed, they appeared to me malevolent in the extreme.

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The following players have been chosen to represent Bedfordshire in the county match at Leicester v. Leicestershire on Saturday (to-morrow): Goal, F. Gentle (Luton Town); backs, J. Allen (Bedford Queen's F.C.) and A. Street (Luton Town); halves, G. Perrins (Luton Town), E. Saunders (captain) (Luton Town), and F. Hoy (Toddington); forwards, J. Durrant (Luton Stanley) and S. Moody (Luton Town) (right), E. Birch (Luton Town) (centre), A. Chamberlain (Bedford Montrose) and W. Wooding (Wymington) (left). Reserves: Draper (Luton Wanderers), E. Stonebridge (Luton Town), and Catlin (Luton Town).