

THE UNITED LEAGUE.

LUTON TOWN v. RUSHDEN.

Played at Luton on Monday. Result:—

Luton Town	5 goals.
Rushden	nil.

The teams were as follow:—

Luton: Williams; Davies and McEwen; Perrins, Stewart and Docherty; Gallacher, Coupar, Catlin, Molnes and Ekins, forwards.

Rushden: George; Ambridge and Lilley; Clarke, Bailey and Dunkley; Denton, Warner, Beddingfield, Sale and Bamford.

Referee, Mr. T. W. Baywell.

A little more than ordinary interest was imparted to the return match between Luton and Rushden on Monday, owing to the fact that the directors had at last plucked up sufficient courage to make an experiment, the first time they have willingly gone out of the usual rut this season. Catlin, who has been displaying capital form with the Reserves, was given a trial in centre, and Perrins—whether from necessity or choice I don't know—was once again given a chance in his usual place.

If experiments had been tried a little earlier in the season, it is highly probable that we should not have lost as many matches as we have. I have never ceased to marvel at the extraordinary perversity which kept Little in a place for which he was obviously unfitted, and allowed Coupar, who has on previous occasions shown himself possessed of the requisite skill for a centre-forward, to remain on the wing.

Still, it's a long lane that has no turning, and I am glad to see that things look like working out right at last. Monday was not an ideal day for football, there being a dampness in the atmosphere and a moisture in the ground, and while the one was not conducive to the comfort of the spectators, the other was not calculated to improve the quality of the football. Nevertheless there was a fairly good gate—about a thousand—and also a fairly good game.

Luton were the first to attack, and presently the spectators, always glad to encourage budding talent, applauded Catlin for a pretty piece of play, but though the ball was often enough taken to goal, it could not be steered between the posts. George just saved a lovely curling shot from Perrins, and fisted out a beauty from Docherty, whilst a moment later Stewart headed over from Perrins' centre.

Several corners were taken by Luton without result, and then Catlin gave Coupar a grand opening, but Jimmy's shot went a little wide. Directly afterwards, a fine pass by the Reserve man provided Ekins with a good chance, but again the bullet missed its billet. A minute or two later, the left-winger had another glorious opportunity, but skied the ball, and then the visitors came within an ace of scoring, McEwen missing a centre from Bamford. Beddingfield

found himself right in front of goal, and shot, but Williams saved grandly.

After the Luton custodian had negotiated a good shot from Clarke, which was the result of a free kick, Luton went to the other end, Catlin sent to the front, and Ekins at close quarters put in a tremendous shot, which rebounded off George. The latter seemed to bear a charmed life, for when he did not get in the way of the ball by design, he did so by accident, and thus all Luton's efforts were frustrated.

Corner after corner fell to the homesters. Once Gallacher placed almost under the bar, and again Ambridge nearly headed through his own goal, but it was not until nearly half-time that a goal came, the ball then being rushed through from Gallacher's centre. A moment later Catlin should have scored from a centre by Ekins, but he hesitated, and the chance was lost. In the last minute, Rushden pretty well succeeded in equalising, Williams running out to clear, and the ball from his kick cannoning off one of the other men. Happily, the danger was averted, and consequently Luton started the second half with a goal lead.

Catlin, who had been shaping well, and was only lacking in dash and decision, was now put inside-right, and Coupar went centre. The result was a marked improvement in the Luton forward play, Coupar keeping the wings going in first-rate style, and making openings for the other men.

The next goal came within two or three minutes of the re-start. Docherty was first of all cheered for some good play, and then McInnes making the running, passed the ball along the line, and Catlin scored a splendid goal, though I think there can be no question that McInnes was off-side when he initiated the effort. Luton had a corner, from which Gallacher placed, and Stewart headed over, and then Rushden went away, Dunkley testing Williams with a good one.

The homesters again faced the play, and the Rushden goal experienced several narrow escapes. At length, after Catlin had made a plucky attempt to get through, there was a bit of a scrimmage in which Stewart and Coupar took part, and the ball going out to Gallacher, that player put on goal number three with one of his old favourites—a tearing shot which gave the custodian no chance.

Soon afterwards, Ekins was applauded for getting the better of a prolonged struggle with Bailey, whom the Luton spectators delight to see beaten, and McInnes receiving the ball, passed on to Coupar, who took the leather on the run, and scored with a magnificent shot. Luton were next indulged with three corners, which were not improved upon, and Rushden then made two or three fine runs down the field. They were repulsed, and a brilliant centre by Ekins gave Catlin a rare opening, but the ball slipped from his foot. Docherty, however, got in a long one the next minute, and Catlin had the satisfaction of scoring the fifth and last goal, whilst a little later he headed another which was given offside.

Altogether, the game was a very interesting one, and except in the last few minutes, when they tired a bit, the Luton players went about their work in a thoroughly energetic and business-like manner. The great improvement which Coupar's appearance at centre brought about among the forwards should ensure his been given that position again. No man has been able to fill Galbraith's place as he has. Young Catlin showed very promising form, and he only wants a few chances and a little coaching to enable him to secure a position in the team at a not very remote date. His passes were splendidly judged, and all he suffered from was a natural lack of nerve, which occasionally prevented him putting in the required dash at the right moment.

McInnes as usual worked like a nigger, and both Ekins and Gallacher put in plenty of good play. I was particularly pleased to see Perrins again among the half-backs, and I hope he will keep there. It seems to me he has not been very fairly treated this season. He is fast, and that is just what we want in the defence. Of course, it is not to be expected that a man who is put in about once in a blue moon is going to do everything just as well as a man who has been playing regularly, but I remember that last year Perrins ran Stewart and Docherty very close for premier honours, and there is no reason why he should not do so again. Even on Monday's form the team in no way suffered from his inclusion. He sometimes lost a little ground by not tackling his man at once, but that was all.

Stewart did excellent service, as he always does, and Docherty was in fine form, playing his best game so far as this season is concerned. Both Davies and McEwen performed in first-rate fashion, and Williams was very safe in goal. The Rushden forwards are too little to be effective against a strong defence but they are wonderfully smart, and possess any amount of pluck. Bailey has deteriorated a lot, and is very different from the Bailey of two or three years back. Clarke and Lilley performed well, and George showed up well in goal. The United League table now reads as follows:—

Goals

The "Evening News" on Saturday week passed some very severe and unwarrantable strictures on Luton's display in the Tottenham Hotspur match, as will be seen from the following:—"Taking advantage of an inexperienced referee, Luton hesitated at nothing, and Mr. Overton, when appealed to at the finish, admitted the foul tactics, and explained he had cautioned Docherty three times and McCartney twice. Davies was also interviewed for striking Hartley. This is all very well, but if a man is to be cautioned three times and then allowed to continue, rough play will be as frequent as ever. Some of the Luton men had their names taken, and it is possible that more may be heard of the matter. . . . At the moment this is written, Cullen, the Hotspur goalkeeper, is lying in an almost critical condition, caused by a kick in his chest, and in face of this one Luton player, after the match, in the local hostelry, boasted that he played once in a match when three men were carried off—one with a broken leg, another with a broken collar-bone, and the third with a dislocation. Can it be wondered at that professionalism has so often the finger of scorn pointed at it?"

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On Saturday last, the "Evening News" printed a letter from Messrs. Neve and Back, pointing out the injury such unfounded statements were likely to do to the Luton Club, and there also appeared the following letter from Mr. Overton, the referee:—"Foundling Hospital, W.C., Nov. 29th, 1897. Sir,—In justice to the Luton players in the English Cup-tie at Tottenham on November 20th, I beg that you will allow me to make a few corrections of your statements in 'Notes and Comments' of last Saturday. 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. 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. 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 grossly misinformed. No one appealed to me at the finish, and consequently I did not admit the foul tactics. . . . 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 twenty-two years' experience of the game.—I am, sir, your obedient servant,—A. OVERTON." But there was not a word of apology.

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