

THE LEAGUE.—SECOND DIVISION.

LUTON TOWN v. MANCHESTER CITY.

Played at Luton on Saturday. Result:—

Luton Town 3 goals.
Manchester City nil.

The teams were as follow:—

Luton — Williams, goal; McCartney and McEwen, backs; Davies, Stewart, and Docherty, half-backs; Gallacher and Coupar, right; Donaldson, centre; Little and McInnes, left.

Manchester—Williams, goal; Harper and Ray, backs; Moffat, Smith, and Holmes, half-backs; Meredith and Whitehead, right; Gillespie, centre; Williams and Leonard, left.

Referee, Mr. Rollings; Walsall; linesmen, Messrs. J. W. Wilson (Balham), and A. C. Knight (Bedford).

Saturday was a great day for Luton, not because it happened to be the first of the New Year, nor merely because the local club had the honour of entertaining one of the crack clubs of the Second Division of the League; but because the Luton players had the satisfaction of beating their formidable opponents to a greater extent than they had ever been beaten before—that is, so far as the present season is concerned.

Manchester City came with an excellent record. In fifteen matches they had only had thirteen goals chalked up against them—not one a match—against which they had scored thirty-seven, giving an average of about two and-a-half goals every time they had taken the field in a League game. Twice only had they been defeated, once at Burnley, by three goals to one, and again by Newton Heath, by a goal to nil.

It will therefore be seen that Luton had no slight task before them, but thanks to the advent of Donaldson, and thanks to the change which has come over the character of the play in consequence, they entered into the struggle with every confidence, and that confidence was shared by their supporters.

The Manchester men, who had done part of the journey over-night, arrived at Luton at a quarter to eleven on Saturday morning, by which time the fog, which had previously been threatening to mar the success of the fixture, had cleared off. The men seemed to be perfectly fit, and in no wise affected by their travelling.

The match had been well billed in the district around, and with good results, the crowd of four thousand including a very large number of strangers. Indeed, the Luton people themselves were very slow in putting in an appearance, and at one time it seemed that the gate would attain to only ordinary dimensions. The Red Cross Band brought a pretty good following when they came to the ground, but the bulk of the Luton supporters did not turn up until the last moment.

The Mancunians were the first to step into the arena, and a very smart lot they looked in their white knickers and pale green shirts. They gave one the impression of being a particularly fast set—using that term in the football acceptation—none of them carrying a superabundance of what the flowery writer delights to call adipose tissue. The Luton men also appeared to be in first-rate condition, but that was more than could be said of the ground.

The wet, muggy weather, following upon the frost had made some portions of the pitch very like a quagmire, and this considerably interfered with the play, making passing and shooting a difficult matter. Luton were the worst sufferers, as they were more often within shooting range.

The kick-off took place at half past two. Luton losing the toss, and having to set the ball in motion, and the hearts of the spectators were delighted by seeing the homesters at once make tracks for the Manchester goal, at which Gallacher got a decent shot, the custodian saving by kicking out. This was followed by another run, Donaldson passing to Little, and the latter putting in a centre, from which Luton probably would have scored but for the difficulty of getting the ball off the ground.

As it was, they had to be content with an unproductive corner. The Manchester right wingers got away, but were pulled up in a clever way by McEwen. They came again, however, and while Luton were appealing for offside, Meredith forced a corner. Luton cleared beautifully, and went to the other end, but were repulsed, and Whitehead got a fine opening, but sent miles over.

Luton responded, and to some tune, Docherty dropping the ball right in front of goal. The City Williams ran out to clear, but Donaldson made a grand rush, and tricked him in a very smart manner, finishing up with a shot which went in just under the bar. Thus, ten minutes from the start, Luton were a goal to the good, a fact of which the crowd did not forget to show appreciation.

The City endeavoured to retaliate, but Gillespie was robbed by McEwen, and a foul against Holmes helped Luton on to Manchester territory, where, from a middle by Docherty, Gallacher and Donaldson both sent in shots which rebounded off their opponents, and then Docherty followed with a trimmer, the ball passing right across the mouth of goal, and just by the opposite post.

A mistake by the referee having robbed Little of a good opening, Donaldson and Coupar got going, and Gallacher being placed in possession, sent the leather just over the bar. Luton were playing strongly now, the forwards showing very pretty combination, and being admirably backed up by the halves, whilst the two Macs were generally able to smother any attempts by the City forwards.

Two or three off-side decisions against McInnes and Gallacher did not give unlimited satisfaction to the spectators, who also admonished the referee to "keep his eyes open" in the matter of fouls. Soon afterwards, Ray missed a shot from McInnes, but recovered himself just in time to save his goal. The City forwards then got dangerously near the Luton goal, but Stewart stepped in and relieved Williams of anxiety.

Luton renewed their overtures, and time after time threatened to again bring about the downfall of the Manchester citadel, but the mud sadly impeded their operations. Once, from a centre by McInnes, Gallacher received right in front, but was worried by a couple of his adversaries, and shot over.

After this, the visitors put a lot of spirit into their play, but could not make much impression on the Luton defence, and they were soon afterwards driven back to their own half, where, after Donaldson had been tripped without attracting the attention of the referee, Coupar passed back to Little, and the latter shot splendidly, the ball going just the wrong side of the net. In like manner, Davies gave a pass to McCartney, and the old veteran sent in a lovely one, which Williams cleared by kicking out.

Luton kept up the pressure, and the Manchester goalkeeper had to fust out several times, at last giving a corner, which was finely placed by Gallacher, and Little making a rush to head into the net, bowled over friend and foe like a lot of ninepins. Directly afterwards, Docherty got in a grand centre, and after the City custodian had once more saved, the ball was scrimmaged through, Coupar giving the final touch.

It was the one point required to settle the fate of the match, and the spectators cheered enthusiastically. Only a minute remained before the interval, and Luton were making another grand rush, when the whistle went. The homesters had fully deserved their two goals leads on the play, and having regard to this fact, the onlookers settled down to see the second half with a comfortable feeling that all was going well.

Upon the re-start, Luton went away in good style, and Davies middling, Donaldson shot, and this was followed by another, to which the keeper gave a corner; but nothing resulted, Davies placing badly. But if he failed in the corner kick, he was playing splendidly in the field, and McEwen about this time was also applauded for a glorious piece of work, in staying off an attack from Gillespie and the right wing.

From one of the free kicks awarded Luton, Docherty placed, and Little's shot just touched the outside of the upright. Davies next ran clean through the Manchester defence, and put

in a grand shot, which Williams carried behind. Gallacher took the kick from the flagstaff, and after a bit got in a return which Molnes headed against the bar at the same moment that the whistle went for offside.

Leonard responded with a smart run, and centred to Gillespie, who shot at close range, but the Luton Williams took this, almost the first opportunity of proving himself as good a man as his Manchester namesake, and saved in fine style. Luton went to the other end, and were rewarded with a couple of corners, from the second of which Gallacher headed just over the bar.

Little next got away, but the custodian ran out and cleared, and then Davies followed on with two lovely shots, Ray clearing from the first and Williams disposing of the second. The visitors were not done with, however, and this they showed by making a determined effort to retrieve their fortunes. McCartney, in stopping Meredith, came pretty near giving a penalty, but from a corner which followed he cleared grandly, and Williams was equally successful in disposing of shots from Williams and Whitehead.

The visitors made one more effort after this, when Whitehead sent high over the bar, and Holmes subsequently got in a good shot, which stuck in the mud, and led to an exciting moment in front of the Luton goal, but for the rest the Mancunians were confined to their own territory, Luton going full steam ahead. Molnes and Little were the first to get away, but were jumped at by Harper, and Docherty taking the free kick which was awarded, the Manchester goalkeeper had to fist out a beauty from Coupar. Gallacher and Coupar next forced a corner, and Little was instrumental in obtaining another, from which Williams was again called upon to exercise his punching propensities.

At length, just when the spectators had begun to think there would be no more scoring, Gallacher sent in a good middle, and Donaldson, fastening upon the ball, hit the inside of the upright, Molnes just putting on the finishing touch. The play of the last minute or two was chiefly noticeable for a splendid piece of work by Coupar, but nothing tangible resulted, and the game ended in a win for Luton by three goals to nil.

It was a grand victory, and the Luton players were entitled to every cheer that they received. They had proved themselves all over the better team, and there was nothing of the fluke about their success. The match meant a great deal to Manchester, who are now only one point ahead of Newcastle United, and they tried all they knew. If the mud had not been quite so sticky, however, I think they would have been beaten even more decisively.

I don't want to make an idol of Donaldson—the worst service one can render any man is to idolise him—but there is not the least doubt that he is making all the difference to the Luton team. He is not only showing first-rate form himself, but is inspiring confidence in the men working with him, and the result is seen in his play, which is as good for goal-getting as it is pretty to look at.

I never knew a time when the Luton men were keener in winning their matches than they are at the present moment, and I never knew a time when they were more capable of doing it. Donaldson played splendidly on Saturday, and Coupar was again in champion form. Gallacher, too, fairly revelled in his work, and Molnes and Little made a very effective left wing. The former was wonderfully smart and tricky, and the latter, though not so clever in his methods, played a dashing game.

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Davies was in his most brilliant mood at half-back, and Docherty was again in excellent trim, the centres which he put in from time to time being beautifully judged. To show that Stewart did his work thoroughly well, it is only necessary to say that he completely overshadowed Gillespie, who has this season been one of the most successful centre-forwards in the League.

McEwen played a very fine game at back. He seems to have put on a lot of speed lately, and his tackling was all too good for his opponents. McCartney also performed in first-rate fashion, but I thought his tendency to get up the field caused him to put in rather more work than was absolutely necessary. He certainly did not spare himself. Williams was very seldom vouchsafed an opportunity of showing his skill.

For the visitors, Williams in goal gave a capital display, and Ray put in any amount of good work at back. Harper was a little uncertain. Smith was a very smart centre-half, and he had a good partner in Holmes, a splendidly-built man. Meredith, the Welsh International, and Leonard played well on their respective wings. Whitehead also performed very fairly, and Gillespie did enough to show that if he did not shine, it was not his fault.

Burnley, the top sawyers of the League, did not perform very brilliantly at home against Lincoln, whom they just managed to beat by two goals to one, whilst Newcastle United achieved a similar result against Walsall. Newton Heath obtained a much more decisive victory over Burton Swifts, the margin being four to none, and Gainsborough Trinity did well by going to Darwen and winning by four goals to two. Woolwich Arsenal drew at Blackpool at three goals all. On Monday, Manchester City at home beat Walsall by three goals to two, and Loughborough suffered a similar defeat at Newcastle. The following is the League table up-to-date: