

FOOTBALL.

LUTON AND THE SECOND LEAGUE.

ROUT OF WALSALL.

A CAPITAL EXHIBITION.

The Walsall team made the journey to Luton on Saturday to decide their return League fixture with the "stripes," and considerable interest was manifested in the encounter hereabouts, owing to the fact that the locals had tamely succumbed when they played at Walsall about a month ago. On that occasion the "saddlers" obtained a hollow and surprising victory by no fewer than five goals to none, the dual explanation of the straw-workers' failure being the holding of the club dinner on the Thursday and the losing of their heads by some of the players. The men had their credit to recover on Saturday; and this they succeeded in doing by piling up half-a-dozen goals to none. This performance was regarded as all the more creditable from the fact that the home team had gone through the sifting up process. McCartney was prevented by injuries from playing while Davies was indisposed and unable to make his appearance. Under these circumstances Docherty played at right back, while Perrins and Birch were introduced at right and left half respectively. The visitors were strongly represented. The weather was brilliant and the "gate" was an excellent one; but the spectators were not very enthusiastic.

The start was made five minutes after the advertised hour, when the elevens lined up thus:—

Luton Town: Goal, Williams; backs, Docherty and McEwen; half-backs, Perrins, Stewart (capt.) and Birch; forwards, Gallacher and Coupar (right), Donaldson (centre), Little and McInnes (left).

Walsall: Goal, Bunyan; backs, Peers and G. L. Aston; half-backs, Wilks, Jenkyns and Taggart; forwards, Hodson and Aston (right), Devey (centre), Johnson and Griffin (left).

Referee, Mr. Beardsley (Plumstead).

Luton played from the Farm end, Stewart having failed in the toss; this necessitated their facing the glare of the sun and what little wind was blowing. Early in the game hands was awarded against the locals and the visitors came up the field in good style. The "stripes," however, thus early had the measure of their opponents and were playing in much better fashion. When the game had been in progress three or four minutes Stewart received from McInnes and shot grandly, Bunyan saving well at the cost of a corner. This was capitally placed by Perrins, and Stewart headed into the net after a scrimmage. Jenkyns dealt roughly with McInnes after the score had been made and he was soundly hooted. The strangers rendered themselves conspicuous by some neat play and Perrins effected a clever clearance, Taggart (the old West Bromwich Albion player) winding up by kicking over the goal-line. A glaringly incorrect decision was given just after by the referee, McInnes being pulled up for an alleged foul on Peers, who had certainly been the culprit and not the Lutonian. The spectators had noted the undue vigour which Peers had infused into his charge, and they did not omit to express their opinion concerning the charge and the decision. Williams cleared well from Devey after the free-kick. McInnes got well under weigh, only to be neatly stopped by Jenkyns right in front of goal. A magnificent centre by Gallacher travelled just over the cross-bar. Another doubtful decision by Mr. Beardsley was noted, Gallacher being punished for jumping when C. Aston had set a back for him and appeared to be most blameworthy. A long shot from Docherty's foot was well punched away by the custodian. Coupar, who received from Little, was given off-side when in front of goal—yet another questionable verdict on the part of the official in charge. There was no wonder that the onlookers expressed dissatisfaction, for the decisions were obviously incorrect frequently. A free-kick for off-side against Walsall was balanced by one against Birch for a foul throw-in. Peers was deservedly hooted for a very nasty foul on McInnes. Loud demands were made for a penalty; but the offence had been committed just outside the 12 yards mark. It was sufficiently close in, however, to lead to a stiff tussle, the Walsall defence proving itself reliable. The spectators were hugely amused by the abrupt departure of one of the "saddlers," whose nether garments had become damaged. Taking a clever pass from Docherty, Donaldson steadied himself and scored a grand goal, both backs attempting to get at him without avail. After appealing to one of the linesmen Mr. Beardsley disallowed the point on the score of a foul, this causing general astonishment, for the notch seemed as legitimate as could be wished for. Little was the next victim, a foul being awarded against him when a Walsall man had accidentally tumbled over his feet. A further foul throw-in by Birch led to Jenkyns heading over the bar. "Cæsar" had resorted to unworthy tactics in the early minutes of the game; but he was now playing in scrupulously fair style and was, moreover, doing exceedingly useful work, his heading being admirable. Donaldson was tripped not very far from the Walsall goal; Perrins took the free-kick and Stewart headed through, this being the home captain's second success of the day as well as Luton's second point. The referee noticed that McInnes was off-side in front of Bunyan, though he had omitted to take cognisance of a violent foul on Donaldson immediately before. A corner to Walsall was sandwiched between fouls against Docherty and McEwen. Just afterwards Gallacher raced down the touch-line and had got within the 12 yards line when he was very badly fouled by Aston. After a consultation with the linesmen the referee awarded a penalty-kick; this was taken by Stewart, with the result that number three was chalked up to the leaders. Jenkyns headed wide from a free-kick, while Williams threw away well when hard pressed. Docherty was playing a very cool game at back, his kicking being clean and well-timed. Walsall were penalised in turn for a foul throw, following which Little dispatched a hot one from a long distance which produced a corner, Bunyan experiencing the utmost difficulty in clearing. Coupar headed wide on receiving from McInnes, who had once more been very heavily charged over. A beauty by Gallacher went wide; but the failure did not matter very much, for Stewart sent in grandly from a 20 yards range and managed to beat the keeper. Coupar lodged the ball in Bunyan's hands, following which Walsall indulged in a strong attack. Subsequently Donaldson broke through splendidly, only to be stopped for fouling close to goal. The same player narrowly missed scoring in a further big struggle; and the locals continued to have all the best of matters to the interval, when the score was as follows:—

LUTON, 4; WALSALL, 0.

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Soon after the resumption a good effort by the home centre from a long range was neatly negotiated by Bunyan, who had been giving a really good display in goal. The popular "Bob" once more became dangerous, when he was unscrupulously charged in the back, an infraction which was not taken cognisance of by the official in charge. At the home end a corner was conceded, from which Stewart headed away. Docherty was the victim of a foul, while Stewart was duly punished for handling. This led to Jenkyns having another shy at goal, Williams saving capitally. Donaldson headed another incursion into the enemy's ground and so hot was the attack that the Walsall defence was hard put to to avert the downfall of Bunyan's charge. Shots were rained in by the home forwards in rapid alternation. A foul eventually brought relief; but the locals were soon busily engaged once more in close contiguity to the strangers' goal. The ball was eventually got away in fluky fashion by the Walsall defenders. Peers saved a beauty from McInnes in brilliant style, Jenkyns emulating this example in dealing with one from the foot of Little. The home left wingers took turns at dispatching splendid shots at goal, these producing some beautiful saves. A first-rate effort by Gallacher brought a corner, which proved unfruitful, and then good work was performed by Little and Stewart in turn. The Luton goal experienced a very narrow escape later on. One of the Walsall forwards succeeded in eluding the backs and found himself in front of Williams with nobody else to beat. It seemed almost certain that he would manage to score, and his final shot certainly deserved success; but Williams effected one of the very best saves of the season, though he gave away a corner. From this Jenkyns headed out. Coupar followed suit, and then a diversion was occasioned by the referee stopping the game and addressing a section of the spectators on the Dunstable-road side. Immediately after the re-start Little scored with a shot which was helped through by Peers. Later on the same player let drive heavily at goal with a low shot, and Bunyan, though he touched the ball, failed to impede its progress into the net. The remainder of the game was almost entirely in favour of Luton, and when the end came the locals had in some measure atoned for the disaster at Walsall with the following performance:

LUTON, 6; WALSALL, 0.

An incident occurred after the game which caused considerable comment. A glass bottle was thrown from the visitors' dressing-room—it was said by Jenkyns—amongst the spectators. The senseless trick fortunately did not bring injury to the local onlookers, for the good reason that one of the Walsall men was struck on the head by the missile as he was coming into the room. The unfortunate man appeared to have sustained a very heavy blow; but he was, happily, not seriously injured, as he might well have been. The act of the thrower of the bottle was strongly condemned by all who witnessed it, and a player who would become guilty of such an offence is deserving of being very severely treated. It ought to be said that more than one of the Walsall players were prone to infusing unnecessary roughness into their display, and had the homesters retaliated to any extent the game would have degenerated into an unworthy exhibition. Fortunately the "stripes" kept their heads on this occasion, with the result that by utilising their skill they managed to emerge as victors with a heavy score.

FOOTBALL FACTS AND FANCIES.

The result of the Walsall match on Saturday was in accordance with general anticipation, in-so-far as the positions in the League table were concerned; but it could hardly have been supposed that with a depleted team the homesters would finish with a margin of six clear goals. The fact that these notches were secured renders the outcome of the first meeting all the more inexplicable.

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The generally accepted explanations of the shocking failure of the "stripes" at Walsall have been so fully entered into already that it will, perhaps, be beside the mark to reiterate them at any length. Briefly, then, my feeling is that the club dinner had something to do with it, and that in addition some of the men lost their heads.

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Prior to Saturday my conviction was that the locals would win handsomely on that day; but when I noticed the rearrangement of the team which circumstances had rendered necessary I confess that my confidence was considerably modified. It was delightful to me to observe how admirably the men shaped, and this was the feeling of every true admirer present.

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Docherty afforded complete satisfaction by the excellence of his display at right back. The show of the ex-Derby man, indeed, caused some surprise; but, bearing in mind the way in which he had demeaned himself under like circumstances, I had confidence in his ability to give a good account of himself. Events proved that that confidence was well founded.

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The substitute for McCartney gratified his sympathisers by giving a cool and efficient exposition, his clean kicking and admirable judgment being all that could be required by the most exacting.

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In regard to Perrins one onlooker remarked "How can he be expected to play when he is put in once in ten games?" The question would be a difficult one to answer if applied to some players; but everybody is familiar with "George's" pluck and pertinacity. He also emerged with credit from his ordeal.

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Birch also furnished a pleasant surprise. He was as much in evidence as could be wished, and time after time he managed to break up the combination of the Walsall right wing by his worrying tactics. By his capital show the "general utility man" of the team advanced considerably in the estimation of the public.

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Perhaps it ought to be explained how it was that McCartney and Davies were absent. "Mac" had been nastily kicked during the 'Spurs' match, while the rough treatment to which he was subjected at the close had the effect of completing the incapacitation process. Davies was indisposed also.

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We had prior to Saturday been inclined to conclude that the absence of McCartney and Davies would have the effect of rendering the defence rocky and demoralising the front rankers. Neither event transpired, though, and the two players—capable as they have proved themselves—will have to look to their laurels.

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I cannot bring myself to believe that the Walsall men played at home in exactly the same style as they did on Saturday, for had they done so I fail to see how they could possibly have totalled five goals and prevented Luton scoring. On Saturday they were infinitely inferior to the winners.

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Until the first goal was scored I was apprehensive as to what was likely to happen. That early success settled the matter so far as I was concerned, and it then became a question of how many goals we were to win by.

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As notch after notch was obtained in smart style it became more and more certain that we were to be presented with a handsome victory, and I do not mind admitting that I was eager for the scoring of that sixth goal, in order that we might have complete revenge.

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Nobody who witnessed the match will be disposed to deny that the conquerors were fully entitled to their triumph. From the outset they played brighter and more attractive football than their antagonists, and there was far more directness in their attack.

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One ought to take an early opportunity of congratulating the home captain on his great success in scoring the first foul goals of the match. It is but seldom, I should imagine, that a centre half manages to pierce the opposition defence four times in a game, and even less frequently does it happen that a player in that position scores four times running.

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Stewart has done some first-rate work in the scoring line this season, even though he has not been so certain on heading from corners as in the past. He is amongst the first flight of prolific scoring half-backs in the country, and is accordingly entitled to this word of encouragement and commendation.

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Of the home forwards the right wing couple were in superb form. They were at the height of their trickiness and Aston (who was described some time since as a most gentlemanly player) was so flustered that he indulged in some unworthy tactics. Gallacher's centres were once more a noteworthy feature in the game.

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Donaldson has never worked harder than in this encounter. He made a bee line for goal every time he secured the ball, and nothing but the most determined bashing could stop him. Cæsar Jenkyns was generally in his way; but even the mighty "Cæsar" was sometimes beaten, for he was not wishful, apparently, of coming into collision with "Bob" oftener than was absolutely necessary. Donaldson had hard luck in having a lovely goal disallowed.

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The left-wingers, though not so conspicuous as their fellows on the opposite wing, put in a deal of useful work. Little was very slow at times; but he made up for this with a brace of excellent goals. McInnes, despite some cruel charging on the part of Peers, was often prominent.

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So far as the homesters are concerned Williams and McEwen are the only two now unnoticed. The custodian covered himself with glory by effecting a superb save from a Walsall forward when a score seemed inevitable. So far as "Mac" is concerned it will suffice to say that he was at his best.

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The man who stands out most prominently on the Walsall side was Jenkyns. The Welsh international in the first few minutes infused undue roughness into his efforts; but when he had settled down he played a gentlemanly game. His heading and placing were splendid, and he was in as good fettle as any man on the field.

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Bunyan effected some wonderful saves. The back pair were very safe as a rule, the halves were moderate, and the forwards were smart. Devey ought, however, to have scored when he got in front of Williams with the ball at his toe.

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The refereeing was by no means of the best. Frequently Mr. Beardsley's decisions were questioned and there appeared to me to be very good reason at times for the objections being urged.

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Other League games on Saturday were: Woolwich drew with Manchester, at Plumstead, 2 all; Burnley beat Small Heath, at Burnley, 4-1; Grimsby beat Burton, at Grimsby, 7-2; Gainsborough beat Loughborough, at Loughborough, 5-0; Darwen defeated the Fosse, at Leicester, 1-0; Lincoln, playing at home, defeated Blackpool, 3-2.

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I learn that the Luton directors have reported to the Association the disgraceful behaviour of the Tottenham spectators last week. Though I shall regret unfortunate results accruing to the authorities, my feeling is that the spectators ought to be shown that they must curb their angry feelings.

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A good deal of rubbish has been written concerning the melee, and it has even been suggested that McCartney commenced it by striking a spectator. As a matter of fact "Mac" had to struggle through a furious mob for 20 or 30 yards and was struck three or four times on the way, and it was when he reached the entrance to the dressing-room that he turned and struck the person referred to. It is a foul libel on the Luton players to suggest that they were responsible for the *emeute*.

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Another story is that Mr. J. J. Bentley, the President of the League, stated that the third goal of the 'Spurs was legitimate. I would stoutly disagree with his dictum, despite his being "one of the best judges in England." The fact stands that Williams was badly fouled and that the referee saw it as well as myself and others who were not blinded by party feeling. So much for the introduction of Mr. Bentley.

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"Astral," replying in the *Morning Leader* to some ludicrous statements by "Tottonian," says of the McCartney incident: "With an uninterrupted view from the grand-stand I distinctly saw the Luton player struck three or four times before he retaliated by hitting a bystander, who was, unfortunately for him, the offending party. Facts equally damaging to the reputation of the Tottenham spectators I preferred to suppress for the benefit of all in this distasteful matter, but would it not be wise for the Hotspur followers to ask themselves whether their prejudiced attitude towards certain visiting clubs is not as much responsible for the foul play which we see, as the unfortunate blunders of the poor, harried ref.?"

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Mr. Bentley, writing in the *Athletic News*, refers to the Tottenham scene thus:—"Time was called and a rush made across the field. The referee was surrounded, but taken in charge, and stuck to his guns well. There were loud cries of 'Dirty Donaldson' and 'Dirty Mac,' and McCartney was struck by some coward, to which he responded, but as a result struck the wrong man, who naturally felt aggrieved. It was anything but a creditable piece of work, and the Luton players were roundly hooted, whilst I was told the aggrieved party was patiently waiting for McCartney."

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"After Thursday's proceedings I fancy a Mr. Lewis is absolutely necessary to keep the teams in order. The gentleman who officiated probably did his best, but he never seemed to get complete grip of the men, and often enough penalised offences that were not apparent to the onlooker, whilst he allowed bad cases to go. He told me afterwards that one of the Hotspurs had backed into Williams and thus impeded him before the ball reached him. It was dusk, but I had a capital view, and it did not strike me in that way. The referee, however, was close up and undoubtedly in a much better position, and he is certainly not lacking in pluck to disallow a goal in the last minute, after having allowed one at the other end under suspicious circumstances."

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"At the same time I think with a sound and strict referee a lot of the unpleasantness would have been avoided, or about half-a-dozen sent to ruminate in the dressing-tent. Certainly such scenes as we had at Tottenham won't do the game any good, and there was no necessity for it, for both sides know how to play football. On the whole I thought the Hotspur the better lot. They are a smart team, with any amount of go, and at times they combined admirably."

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At Small Heath to-morrow the Luton team will be composed exactly similarly to that of Saturday last, McCartney and Davies standing down. The men will travel on Saturday morning.

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