

FOOTBALL.

LUTON AND THE SECOND LEAGUE.

UNLUCKY LOSS AT SMALL HEATH.

McEWEN SCORES A GOAL.

On Saturday the Luton footballers were presented with the extremely difficult task of defeating Small Heath on the Midlanders' ground at Birmingham. The "Heathens" held a splendid record for performances at home, and the thoughts of snatching a victory were not very strong in the minds of the visitors. It was expected, however, that the "stripes" would give the "blues" a good game. The Lutonians, who were still deprived of the services of Davies, McCartney and Ekins, travelled by the Midland train due to depart from Luton shortly before 9 o'clock, and about four hours later they reached the capital of the Midlands, as the hardware city has come to be known. They were accompanied by an enthusiastic, if small, band of supporters. The weather was dull and the ground distinctly on the soft side; but there was a good attendance—surprisingly good, indeed, when it was borne in mind that West Bromwich Albion were engaged in a cup-tie with Sheffield Wednesday not many miles away.

The start was fixed for 3 o'clock, at which time the referee (Mr. W. Henn) took charge of the following sides:—

Small Heath: Goal, Clutterbuck; backs, Archer and Pratt; half-backs, Dunlop, Leake and Robertson; forwards, Hare and Oakes (right), Lewis (centre), Abbott and Wharton (left).

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).

The visiting captain lost the toss and this necessitated facing a wind which by turns blew straight down the ground and chopped round so that the gusts travelled from side to side. The "stripes" were early in evidence and by means of pretty passing made their way to the home end. The Small Heath rear-guard repelled them in good style, and the homesters advanced with considerable dash. Docherty was easily beaten by the fleet and clever forwards and had not McEwen dashed across at a critical period the score would almost certainly have been opened. As it was the ball was sent careering towards mid-field. The home contingent again forced the play, however, and Stewart and Docherty in turns became conspicuous for excellent defensive play. Some exceedingly attractive play by Coupar was generously cheered, as was also a good sample of combination by Little and Donaldson, who broke through splendidly. At a crucial moment the ball was sent on to Gallacher, who was in an off-side situation, and so the effort was unproductive. The right wingers were shortly after again in evidence; Gallacher got clear finely, only to see his comrade send weakly over the line. Next Pratt cleared neatly from Gallacher, the latter steering over the goal-line later on with an effort that deserved better luck than to travel wide. The strangers had by this time settled down and were giving an exhibition which was justly admired by the onlookers, albeit there was a tinge of jealously observable in the expressions of satisfaction. Little made the mistake of passing the ball to a club-mate instead of shooting when he found himself in a good position, the upshot being that the ball was got away. McInnes obtained possession smartly and broke away, though only to witness another failure on the part of the inside right. The outside left again became conspicuous, this time by getting offside. One of the Luton supporters had in enthusiastic fashion expressed his appreciation of the efforts of "Tommy," and this was seized upon by some of the home admirers as a pretext for indulging in some ill-natured chaff, this proceeding to such lengths that a custodian of the peace felt justified in admonishing the crowd to abstain from letting them "have so much of 'Tommy.'" The spectators showed themselves amenable to such warnings—for the time being, at least. Meanwhile Gallacher had narrowly missed opening the scoring, while Robertson was deservedly applauded for some effective play. At the Luton end the homesters were pulled up for off-

for the time being, at least. Meanwhile Gallacher had narrowly missed opening the scoring, while Robertson was deservedly applauded for some effective play. At the Luton end the homesters were pulled up for off-side, while a pretty run by McInnes terminated with a pass to Gallacher which was not turned to account. The Small Heath halves were putting themselves in evidence to some purpose; but the Luton forwards were giving such a fine display that they had matters pretty much their own way just now; indeed, they seemed to be able to do everything but score. Abbott afterwards found himself unimpeded at the Luton extremity—and tamely shot over the bar. Robertson and Leake performed more admirable work, following which Birch sent the ball off at a tangent from goal. It ought to be said that though the Lutonians were having a deal the best of the exchanges the "Heathens" proved themselves a very smart team; they were very quick on the ball and played a fast game. Wharton, who was a strong favourite with the crowd, got well under weigh on the left, and then centred so weakly as to present a very easy task to the defenders. The Small Heath man made amends in the next minute by dispatching a beauty at Williams, which that worthy fisted away splendidly. A silly and totally unnecessary foul was committed by Birch with the result that a goal was scored; the free-kick was well taken and Oakes headed into the net, Williams having no chance. After the re-start McInnes gave Archer a hot one to deal with, and the back acquitted himself manfully. Gallacher failed to centre accurately on receiving a well-judge pass, and the result was that Docherty was called upon to clear, which he did brilliantly. Clutterbuck saved marvellously from Donaldson and McInnes, following which Gallacher was brutally charged by Pratt, the result being that he was hurt. Next Donaldson burst through determinedly and forced a corner, from which Stewart scored smartly and thus brought the scores level. Abbott shortly afterwards was seen in front of Williams with a grand opening, and he missed. First-rate play by Coupar enabled the Lutonians to make their way up the field once more, some lovely head work by the "stripes" being witnessed. They were beaten back, though, and at the Luton end McEwen conceded a corner. Birch followed suit and Abbott put his side ahead after Williams had effected a partial clearance. The score was smartly made; but it seemed that the custodian ought not to have been so easily beaten. Both Luton backs acquitted themselves well in the next minute or two, while beautiful play by McInnes and Little transferred the scene of operations to the home half. Little came into prominence by means of a useful sample of dexterity, following which Coupar had hard luck in heading a trifle too high on taking a pass from Birch. A misunderstanding between the Luton rear-guard men almost produced disaster, the home forwards sending tamely out of play. Oakes landed the ball on the net, and followed this up by sending wide, while Williams effected a wonderful save from a rasping shot by Wharton, who was continuing to distinguish himself. The leaders were now having a bit the best of matters; but the Luton defence was sound, Williams and McEwen rendering themselves conspicuous in turn. The "stripes" indulged in a strong attack subsequently and secured a fruitless corner. Later on Wharton gave Williams more trouble, the Lutonian clearing grandly. At this stage the scores were equalised once more, this resulting from an egregious hesitancy upon the part of Archer and Pratt. The ball had been sent between them, and while they were wondering which should take it Donaldson rushed between them and sent the ball past Clutterbuck. The goal was certainly lucky; but it was well deserved by the acuteness of the visiting centre forward. The home lot soon obtained the mastery, however. Following a free-kick a Lutonian pushed an adversary in the back within the 12 yards line, and Mr. Henn promptly awarded a penalty. Abbott took this and had no difficulty in beating Williams. This happened about a minute before half-time, and when the whistle sounded the scores were:

SMALL HEATH, 3; LUTON, 2.

The second half was not nearly so interesting as the first, the play deteriorating vastly. It started with a nasty foul by Small Heath. A long shot from a "Heathen" travelled wide of the Luton posts, Abbott making a further mistake of a like nature. Docherty became prominent for a good clearance, while Gallacher swung across a beautiful centre to McInnes, who was unfortunately off-side right in front of goal. Williams threw away well when hard pressed, the ball being returned over the

visitors' line immediately afterwards. Wharton was responsible for a tame exhibition, following which Luton got down well, though only to be quickly driven back. Some dissatisfaction was expressed by the spectators when the referee disregarded a confident appeal by the "blues" for a corner. Receiving from Perrins in the home confines, Gallacher sent across the goal-mouth. The Lutonians were justly punished for fouling and so hot was the attack which followed the free-kick that Stewart headed over at the cost of a corner. Another sample of unwelcome roughness by a Lutonian near his own goal very nearly produced disaster, Williams effecting a magnificent save. McKwen cleared finely a little later on. It ought to be said that the pace had slackened considerably and that the play was now somewhat tame after the excellence which had characterised the efforts of the rivals prior to the interval. Docherty presented the opposition with a corner from which Hare very nearly succeeded in scoring, the ball going a little wide of the post. A good deal of kicking into touch was indulged in and the play was by no means free from fouls, Luton being the greatest offenders in this regard. Coupar tried a long-range shot without success, and then a foul by Small Heath on Stewart brought relief. McEwen sent over the bar with the free-kick. McInnes was similarly unfortunate soon afterwards. A dire disaster happened to the Lutonians in the next few minutes. Wharton sent in a grand cross shot and McEwen, in attempting to clear, scored a grand goal for Small Heath. Williams was evidently amazed, and he was the picture of mortification as he gazed ruefully at his comrade. Truth to tell "Mac" appeared no less sorrowful. A couple of corners were conceded to the "Heathens" and for some time the Lutonians did not recover from the disappointment which "Mac's" misfortune had plunged them into; indeed, they never did completely, for they seemed to lose their heads. So unacceptable were the tactics, indeed, that the referee felt called upon to caution McEwen. Good exhibitions by the custodians were the most noteworthy points in a very unsatisfactory second half. It ought to be observed that Perrins left the field, having sprained his thigh. At one stage McEwen narrowly missed heading through his own goal, while the same player gave away another corner. Foul succeeded foul as the game progressed; and it must be confessed that the bulk of these were awarded against Luton. The ultimate result of a stubbornly contested game was:

SMALL HEATH, 4; LUTON, 2.

It ought to be added that a section of the spectators who had rendered themselves conspicuous by their demonstrative behaviour gathered near the grandstand at the close and, in language distinctly more forcible than polite, informed the Luton players what they thought of them as they filed off the ground. The burden of the expressions consisted of strongly worded advice to play the game—and the Small Heath supporters exemplified a peculiarly close acquaintance with the vulgar tongue. Happily they drew the line at this, and so all was well. The Luton team were entertained to tea at the Colonnade Hotel after the match, and reached home shortly after 10, the Midland Company having stopped the Scotsman at Luton for their convenience.

FOOTBALL FACTS AND FANCIES.

It was an enthusiastic if small band of supporters that set out with the "stripes" to Small Heath on Saturday, and it included myself as the sole representative of local journalism. The trip was a very pleasant one, if the result of the visit was not so satisfactory as might have been wished so far as the scoring was concerned.

★

For once in a way my ideas of the probable outcome were pessimistic, despite the fact that some admirers prophesied a draw and even a win for the Lutonians. I could not lose sight of the splendid home record of the "Heathens," nor could I forget that the Luton side was not at full strength, for Davies and McCartney were still absentees.

★

What happened in the early part of the first half was an agreeable surprise to me. When the "stripes" had settled down they played so finely as to be "all over" their opponents, clever lot as were the latter. Indeed, five minutes from the interval I began to think there was a very good chance of obtaining a couple of points.

★

But then came the great misfortune of the day for the Lutonians, a penalty-kick being awarded against them. Though I am convinced that an offence was committed I did not think it serious enough to warrant the extreme penalty being imposed, for it seems to me that a slight push is over-punished by a goal being obtained.

★

Williams made a gallant effort to save; but Abbott was too skilful for him, and we had the mortification of knowing that the "blues" had obtained an advantage to which their display had certainly not entitled them. The Luton players were necessarily chagrined, and they were very outspoken on the matter at the interval and after the match.

★

Even yet the cup of misfortune for the "stripes" was not full. The second half had been in progress some minutes when McEwen, in attempting to kick away a shot by Wharton, scored a lovely goal for Small Heath. This is only the second time in his time with Luton that "Mac" has been similarly unfortunate, the other occasion being when he presented the "Calies" with a notch.

★

Though deeply disappointed at the downfall I could not repress a laugh when I looked at Williams. He glared at "Mac" in reproachful fashion, and his expression might have melted a heart of stone. The home supporters were fain to concede that the point was exceedingly lucky.

★

It was not altogether to be wondered at that after two such cruel samples of Fortune's disfavour the visitors should have played a worse game than before the interval. They did not, it is true, "throw up the sponge" altogether; but for the most part their efforts were devoid of that dash and brilliancy which had marked them in the early portion of the game.

★

There were a great many fouls in the second moiety and a regard for the truth compels the admission that the majority of these were awarded against Luton. It was not altogether creditable to the "stripes" that this should be the case, though few of the fouls were of the vicious order.

★

It was from an extremely silly foul by Birch that a goal was obtained in the first half, and both he and Gallacher were punished for unduly vigorous charging after the interval. It was a pity that this had to be laid to their charge, for it had its effect on the game.

★

The attitude of the spectators was hostile on the

*

It was from an extremely silly foul by Birch that a goal was obtained in the first half, and both he and Gallacher were punished for unduly vigorous charging after the interval. It was a pity that this had to be laid to their charge, for it had its effect on the game.

*

The attitude of the spectators was hostile on the whole, though many in the crowd were to be found shouting for Luton. One gentleman with an especially raucous voice roused the ire of one of the Luton supporters and he was particularly offensive in that would-be witty style which is so often seized upon by ignoramuses.

*

Another of the Lutonians in the early part of the game allowed his jubilation to lead him into crying "Go it, Tommy." This was eagerly seized upon by the crowd as the pretext for jeering remarks to the Luton left wingers. The Lutonians wisely remained silent; but the behaviour became so offensive as to call forth stern remonstrances from a police officer present.

*

What of the play? Well, the "Heathens" are by no means to be despised. On the contrary they are a very smart team of young players, quick on the ball and speedy when in mid-field and very dangerous when near goal. At the same time I consider their chances of repeating Saturday's performance when they come to Luton very remote.

*

Having said that the "stripes" played a rattling good game until the period of the penalty kick I should like to abstain from further criticism; but some will require to know more of the performances of individual players.

*

Briefly, then, Little was not by any means a success at inside left. He occasionally did well; but his mistakes were more frequent than were his samples of good play. Perrins was weak at right half, and neither Birch nor Docherty were so successful as in the previous week, though the left half played pluckily.

*

The most admirable exhibition was that of Coupar, who worked throughout unflaggingly and was repeatedly conspicuous. The left wing defenders did not know what to make of him, and had his shooting been a wee bit more accurate his display would have been perfect.

*

Donaldson was, as usual, a very hard worker. He was carefully watched; but despite that he managed to break through frequently, and he was always dangerous when he got near Clutterbuck. The way in which he scored Luton's second goal was splendid and greatly delighted all of us who had journeyed from Luton.

*

Gallacher did some very pretty work, some of his centres being excellent. His shooting was not up to the customary standard. McInnes was repeatedly prominent, his neat heading and tricky passes being very useful.

*

Stewart at centre half and Docherty at right back were in pretty good fettle, though the latter was not so reliable as against Walsall. McEwen, save for his disastrous blunder, played a fine game, his clearances being marvellous at times.

*

Williams effected some wonderful saves and he has no cause for repining. I thought his clearance which preceded the second Small Heath goal was a bit weak;

but he had no earthly chance with the other shots—especially McEwen's.



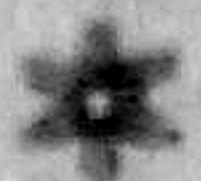
I have said that the "Heathens" are a smart set. The forwards are sprightly and clever and they know how to shoot. The halves are moderate, save that Robertson is a grand player, while the backs and custodian are reliable.



I confess that Mr. Henn did not strike me very favourably as referee. He was as fair as could be; but he made several glaring blunders.



The return journey was rendered all the more pleasing by the fact that the Midland Company consented to stop the Scotsman at Luton, the saloon being attached at Leicester. The rest of us had a comfortable hour's ride in one of the corridor carriages.



Other Second League matches on Saturday were:—Woolwich Arsenal beat Grimsby, at Grimsby, 4—1; Walsall beat Darwen, at Darwen, 2—1; Leicester Fosse, playing at home, defeated Lincoln City, 3—1.



The League table after these games stood thus:—