

THE LEAGUE.—SECOND DIVISION.

LUTON TOWN v. NEWCASTLE UNITED.

Played at Luton on Saturday. Result:—

Luton Town 3 goals.

Newcastle United 1 goal.

The teams were as follow:—

Luton: Williams, goal; McCartney and McIlwen, backs; Davies, Stewart and Docherty, half-backs; Gallacher, Coupar, Donaldson, Molunee and Birch, forwards.

Newcastle: Watts, goal; White and Jackson, backs; Ghee, Ostler and Stott, half-backs; Allan, Harvey, Peddie, Smith and Campbell, forwards.

Referee, Mr. J. Starke (London); linesmen, Messrs. Peters (Kettering) and Taylor (Aspley Guise).

It was fully anticipated that the match with Newcastle United would be a stubbornly-contested affair, and the anticipations were justified by the event. Newcastle came, they saw, and if they did not conquer, it was not because they were not united, nor because they lacked an element in the way of determination. Never before had a visiting team appeared on the Luton ground in better condition, and never before had the locals been provided with a harder game.

The pity of it was that there was not a bigger crowd to see the struggle. Although the weather, apart from a rather keen wind, left nothing to be desired, the spectators numbered only about three thousand, or two thousand less than there ought to have been, having regard to the importance of the fixture. The Newcastle men came south on Friday, and looked as fresh as paint when they took the line on Saturday afternoon.

From the moment Donaldson kicked off for Luton, who had lost the toss, it was evident that the battle was to be a big one. The Newcastle left wing made a rush, and a misunderstanding by the home backs—about the only one during the game—spelt danger, but Davies succeeded in clearing, and McCartney did ditto a minute later. Luton returned the compliment, and after Donaldson had sent just by the post, a corner was forced. Docherty placed beautifully, but Watts fisted out.

Two or three other attempts by Luton followed, and the result of a bout between Jackson and the home right wing was that Coupar got clear, but was spoiled by White just as he was in the act of shooting. Coupar and Gallacher making a further overture, the latter was somewhat badly fouled by Jackson, but directly after they were down again, and Gallacher almost from the goal-line, got in a marvellous centre, the ball curling into goal. Watts saved, but did not clear, and the other forwards making a rush, Birch landed the ball in the net.

It had taken nearly a quarter of an hour to get this goal, and the fact that it took such a lot of getting made it all the more welcome to the spectators, who shouted themselves hoarse. They were speedily reduced to a more subdued frame of mind, by the fact that Newcastle raced away, and Campbell from a difficult position sent in a smart shot, Williams saving just under the bar.

Then came a number of fouls against the visitors, some of whom were betraying a bit of temper, but for this I think the referee was chiefly responsible. His decisions, curiously enough, had run altogether in favour of the home team, and whilst I am not saying that the Newcastle men were pulled up any oftener than they deserved, I do say that a good many infringements on the other side escaped notice.

At one time, I thought things were going to turn out rather rough, and Coupar certainly did get a good deal of knocking about, which he personally had done nothing whatever to merit, but happily discretion soon became allied to valour, and the game was all the better for it. McCartney highly distinguished himself by several times putting a check on Campbell and Smith, and then Birch got in two or three good runs, but failed in his centres.

Gallacher and Coupar, however, soon forced a corner off Jackson, and the outside-right judging his kick to a nicety, Stewart headed in and the ball was scrimmaged through, a performance which was hailed with spectatorial transports of delight. The success, of course, also had its effect on the players, and for some time Luton had all the best of the game, without, however, adding to their score.

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Then the "Coalties" came on at a rattling rate, and Allan had exceedingly hard luck with a shot which ran along the crossbar, struck the upright, and came out into play. Harvey followed on with a beauty, and after Williams had disposed of this, he had an anxious moment in watching a long dropping shot from Jackson, but was relieved to find it going just over the bar and on to the net. Still another desperate attack was made, and Peddie got in a terrific shot at close quarters, and how it was negotiated is a mystery which Williams alone can solve.

Discouraged by their want of success, the visitors were forced back on to their own territory, where the Luton right wing gave them any amount of trouble. Again and again, disaster threatened the United, and at last, whilst the besieged were appealing for offside against Gallacher, Davies rushed forward, and putting the ball across the mouth of goal, McInnes did a sprint and popped it by Watts.

After first of all awarding Luton a goal, the referee consulted the linesmen and disallowed it on the ground that McInnes was offside. All the spectators in my neighbourhood claimed that the goal was a good one, and that McInnes followed the ball all the way, but personally I was under the contrary impression. Anyway, the point did not count, and Luton crossed over with a lead of two goals to nil.

When play was resumed, it was seen that Newcastle had re-arranged their front string, Campbell and Peddie changing places. The visitors nearly got through at the start, and then for some minutes the battle was waged at the other end, where Watts had a very busy time of it. From a corner, placed by Docherty, the custodian seemed to fetch the ball right out from under the bar, and he also saved well from Davies.

Then the ball was trundled up and down the field, and this was followed by another well-sustained attack on the Newcastle goal, which had its narrowest escape from a shot by McInnes. At last, Campbell broke away in the centre, closely followed by Davies. It seemed any odds on the old Sunderland man doing the trick, and Davies only frustrated his intention by holding on to him. The whistle went, and we all thought it was a penalty, but a free kick only was given, and from this Luton cleared. From where I sat it was impossible to say on which side of the twelve yards' line the foul took place.

A point was not long in coming, however, for the visitors getting down, Peddie sent straight across the mouth of goal, and Allan returned into Williams' hands. The ball apparently had got a twist on, for Dick could not hold it, and had the mortification of seeing the leather roll into the net. No one could deny that Newcastle thoroughly deserved their goal, and the question now was whether they would not succeed in equalising.

Practically speaking, it was at this juncture anybody's game, for though Luton had done the bulk of the pressing and continued to do it, the visitors were always very dangerous when they got anywhere within shooting distance of the home goal. Watts and Williams had to save from grand shots by Gallacher and Allan at their respective ends, and then McEwen placing up the field, Donaldson very cleverly eluded both backs, got quite clear, and put on a third goal for the homesters with a shot which Watts seemed to think it was no use trying to save. The enthusiasm evoked by Donaldson's feat of feet—not feat of arms—put me in mind of the excitement which prevailed in the old Luton v. Millwall days.

The United played gamely right up to the finish, but really Donaldson's goal was the climax, and the issue was never afterwards in doubt. The victory was a very meritorious one, for it is not an exaggeration to say that no better team than Newcastle have appeared on the Bury Park for many a long day. The game with Manchester City was child's play compared with this.

The best man among the visitors, perhaps, was Jackson, the left back, who played a brilliant, though at times not over-scrupulous game. Oetler and Stott proved themselves sterling half-backs, and the forwards were a very robust lot. Campbell was pretty good at outside-left, but he was much stronger at centre, and Peddie, I think, fared better on the wing. The other three members of the front string did their full share of the work, and Watts was a capable custodian.

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Coupar and Donaldson, I understand, had both been on the sick list, but though they were playing under disadvantages, their play did not seem to suffer. Gallacher was in splendid form, and he and Coupar were a very big handful for Stott and Jackson. Donaldson and McInnes were always on the go, and always ready to avail themselves of the smallest opportunity, and Birch also played a very fair game.

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Stewart performed grandly at half-back, and Docherty likewise was wonderfully smart and effective, his accurate placing being one of the features of the match, but Davies was not quite so successful. McCartney appeared to be all the better for his rest, as his exhibition was a very fine one in every respect. Indeed, I doubt whether he has ever played a much better game. McEwen also was in excellent fettle, and Williams, apart from his one misfortune, did well in goal.

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Only fifty odd persons availed themselves of the cheap tickets issued by the Midland Company from St. Pancras on Saturday, and just over a hundred came from St. Albans.

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