

THE UNITED LEAGUE.

LUTON TOWN v. WOOLWICH ARSENAL.

Played at Plumstead on Monday. Result:—

Luton Town 2 goals.

Woolwich Arsenal 2 goals.

The teams were as follow:—

Luton: Williams, goal; McCartney and McEwen, backs; Davies, Stewart and Docherty, half-backs; Gallacher, Little, Donaldson, McInnes and Durrant, forwards.

Arsenal: Ord, goal; McAuley and McConnell, backs; Haywood, Farrell, and Anderson, half-backs; Brook, McGeogh, Hunt, Hannah and White, forwards.

Referee, Mr. Peters (Kettering).

I don't suppose there were many Lutonians sanguine enough to believe that the team which went to Plumstead on Monday was strong enough to bring away a couple of League points. The absence of Coupar meant a great deal, for Jimmy has been showing tip-top form this season, and then for an outside-left, Luton had to rely upon Durrant, a local lad who had been playing consistently well in his class, but who had not had an introduction to football of the better sort.

The men themselves, however, seemed to enter upon the fray in a very hopeful spirit, and the knowledge that the result of the match might mean all the difference between winning and losing the United League championship, apparently made them determined not to give in without a very keen struggle. They arrived on the ground a little before three o'clock, and about twenty minutes later they were ready to line up.

Possibly those of the spectators who had come to see the Arsenal make mincemeat of the Bedfordshire men were a little surprised at the character of the opening play, for Jack was not only as good as his master, but a trifle better into the bargain. Indeed, during the first half-hour, at any rate, Luton were all over the better team, and what combination there was was entirely on their side.

Two or three times in the first few minutes the visitors went away very prettily, and Little, who was showing unexpectedly good form, got in a capital shot from a centre by Docherty, but Ord cleared. Donaldson and McInnes were responsible for other attempts, whereas Williams was called upon for the first time when Hannah sent in a beautiful dropping shot. For a moment there was a bit of excitement in the vicinity of the Luton goal, then a clearance was effected, and afterwards the spectators were treated to a series of free kicks.

Luton again assuming the upper hand, made a spirited attack through the instrumentality of Gallacher and Little, and eventually Donaldson receiving and passing to Durrant, the latter netted the ball with a grand cross shot, which gave Ord no earthly chance. Unfortunately, however, the Luton youth was adjudged to have been offside.

The Arsenal became dangerous from a free kick, but the bulk of the aggressive work continued to be done by Luton, and after five-and-twenty minutes' play, Stewart, profiting by a well-placed kick by McEwen, sent in a terrific shot which one of the backs fisted out. A penalty was awarded, and Davies making no mistake, the visitors thus obtained the lead.

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A curious thing happened soon after the return to the half-way line. Luton were making another attack, and McConnell, in clearing, kicked the ball with terrific force on to the back of Farrell's head, the result being that that player had to retire. As usual, Luton were much less effective against the ten men than they had been against the eleven, and the Arsenal attacked again and again, their assaults being all the more dangerous because the referee failed to detect several palpable infringements of the offside rule.

Once Williams brought off a magnificent save when Hannah shot from about six yards' range, and Luton subsequently cleared from a couple of corners. But the equalising goal was bound to come, and it came from a long kick by McAuley. In the scrimmage which ensued, Stewart appeared to shoot the ball into Williams' hands, and it was then bundled through.

The Arsenal continued to force the pace, but Luton kept them out, and were actually making an attack on their own account when half-time was called. With the resumption of hostilities, Luton got down through a very pretty run by Donaldson, and McAuley gave a corner to a centre from Durrant. Doocherty placed nicely, and Durrant headed past Ord, a performance for which he received a great deal of handshaking from members of the visiting team.

Resuming, operations were again transferred to Woolwich territory, and a miss by one of the backs from a middle by Durrant gave McInnes a splendid opening, but Tommy seemed unable to fasten on the ball, and his shot went the wrong side of the post. The Arsenal, for whom Farrell was again performing, retaliated, and forced a corner, but pressure was relieved by a free kick, and Luton went to the other end, where there ought to have been another penalty, Haywood deliberately pushing Durrant in the back.

Luton now pressed severely, and Gallacher experienced rather hard luck in his attempt to convert a centre from Durrant, while a moment later, when the Arsenal were making for Williams, Farrell had equally hard lines with a scorching shot which was luckily intercepted by McCartney.

Was the second half going to be a repetition of the first? It seemed so, for Luton now slackened down considerably, and the Arsenal came on very strongly, though several efforts were neutralised by the indifferent centres of Brock and White. The latter, however, judged a corner-kick to a nicety, the ball dropping on the crossbar and then in front of goal, but Luton succeeded in clearing.

The visitors broke away now and again, but for the most part play was ruling in favour of the Arsenal, and at last, three or four minutes from the finish, an unlucky kick by Stewart was the means of giving them the goal they so much wished. It happened in this way. McGeoch and Brock were making a run, and McCartney and McEwen were both making for them, when Stewart rushed in and apparently attempted an overhead kick. The ball, however, went in the opposite direction, and a corner was the result.

Brock placed, there was a rush on the left, a bit of a scramble, and then frantic handshaking, dancing and other evidences of exuberant joy on the part of the Arsenal players showed that the ball had found its way into the net. In the few minutes that remained, Luton tried hard to snatch a victory, and a good centre by Gallacher afforded a ray of hope, but it was not to be, and the game ended in a draw.

This was satisfactory enough in one way, for it practically ensured Luton's title to the championship. If they only lose one of the two matches yet to be played, which is not unlikely, and the Arsenal win all theirs, which is very unlikely, the teams would be on an equality as regards points, but Luton would win on the goal

average, which is a long way ahead of that of the Arsenal.

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As to the merits of individual players in Monday's game, I may say, that Durrant gave a very fair account of himself. He had to play against a half-back who was continually fouling him, and against a back who was big enough and vigorous enough to frighten him, but nevertheless he made a pretty promising debut. He did not have as good a chance as he ought, because he was so frequently placed offside by the tactics adopted by McAuley. Little played a capital game in the first half, but was not so prominent in the second. The other three forwards all played up to form.

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Stewart worked hard in the first half, but towards the finish of the game showed evident signs of lag—the result, no doubt, of his strenuous work on Saturday. Both Docherty and Davies performed in first-rate style, the backs did all that backs could do, and Williams was responsible for some brilliant saves. Perhaps McAuley was the most successful of the Arsenal players, with whom smartness was a much more conspicuous feature than science.

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Candidly, I did not like the refereeing. In regard to Saturday's game, my complaint was that Luton were given too much latitude; on Monday I thought Mr. Peters went to the opposite extreme. I may have been mistaken, but it seemed to me that the bigger sinners received the least punishment, and that the Arsenal often did with impunity what Luton were penalised for. The gate amounted to about £70.

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