

LUTON AND THE UNITED LEAGUE.

LUTON SECURE THE CHAMPIONSHIP.

DEFEAT OF LOUGHBOROUGH.

visit of the Luton team to Loughborough on had an important bearing on the United championship, for a win meant making the top certainty for the "stripes", while a loss would endangered Luton's position. A strong side was and it proved capable of doing what was the "Luffs" being beaten by three goals to Loughborough team was weakened by the rough injuries, of Horace Pike and "Tich" was otherwise at full strength. Mr. A. G. (ottingham) was the referee, and the Luton

eleven was composed thus :—Goal, Williams ; backs, McCartney and McEwen ; half-backs, Davies, Stewart and Docherty ; forwards, Gallacher and Coupar (right), Donaldson (centre), McInnes and Little (left).

The ground was in good condition, but there was a very strong wind blowing from end to end, and Luton, losing the toss, had to face it in the initial portion of the game. The play was of a very even character from the kick-off right up to half-time, and both sides missed opportunities of scoring. Although playing against the wind the Luton defence was much too strong for the Loughborough forwards, McEwen and Stewart particularly distinguishing themselves. Coupar, too, fell back among the halves and rendered valuable assistance, and when half-time came the score-sheet was blank. After the change of ends the Luton men attacked strongly and in about five minutes from the re-start Gallacher dribbled round Hardy, the Loughborough left back, and scored a really brilliant goal. Then a few minutes later a foul was awarded against Mumford, and Coupar, taking the kick passed to McCartney, who shot hard into goal. The ball would have travelled just wide of the post had not Donaldson rushed up and put the finishing touch on, the ball going through off his jaw. Shortly afterwards McCartney kicked the ball on to a home forward and Tuthill secured, beat McEwen, and scored a very fine goal. Before the finish Donaldson, with one of his characteristic rushes, secured another point for Luton, shooting the ball into the corner of the net. This being all the scoring the game finished with the following totals :—

LUTON, 3 ; LOUGHBOROUGH, 1.

The state of the ground suited the team much better than it has lately and the play of the men was a great improvement on recent shows, despite the strong wind. Docherty played a very fine game in the second half and sent across many useful centres. McInnes, too, worked very hard and put in some splendid play. The backs shielded Williams well, but the little the custodian had to do was done satisfactorily. The forwards played a rushing game, the backs and halves sending the ball up towards the goal. Little, though he tried hard, was evidently out of place on the extreme wing. Loughborough played a hard game and put in all they knew. The wind spoiled the combination, but the game was wonderfully free from fouls.

FOOTBALL FACTS AND FANCIES.

One cannot honestly say that the results of the Easter matches of the Town Club at home have been satisfactory. The worst in point of importance was the loss to Leicester Fosse, considering that the "stripes" had found it possible to draw at Leicester on the first Saturday in the season.

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I have a distinct recollection of going to Leicester with a feeling that we should be lucky to escape defeat. After the game there was some disappointment expressed that we had not won, as we had fully deserved to do on the play.

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It would be very pleasing to me were the same thing able to be said concerning Friday's operations. Emphatically the Luton players deserved their beating; indeed, had the margin in favour of the visitors been wider none need have marvelled. The Lutonians never shaped like a winning side.

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My disappointment was intense, for the brace of League points added to the losses of the three preceding League matches brought the total to seven out of eight. This would have been bad enough if the games were away from home; but two of them were on the Luton ground—and what is to be said then?

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When the team began so brilliantly away from home there is no doubt that too high an estimate was formed of them. I am content to climb down to that extent. What is the use of arguing in face of such wretched records as one has to present this week?

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Frankly the side as at present constituted has been one of the most unreliable and in-and-out combinations that could well have been got together. One day nothing has been too brilliant for them to achieve; the next the brilliance has fizzled out, and the team has come down with a flop. Truly I am weary of it all, and my feeling but puts into expression the thoughts of others.

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After which preliminary let me say that there was a capital "gate" on Friday and no lack of enthusiasm. That the chagrin at the close amongst the home supporters was intense I well know, for it was stated to me in somewhat strong language.

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The downfall is all the more distressing when one considers that the conditions were almost wholly in favour of the locals. All sorts of suggestions were made concerning it, and some of them were by no means complimentary to those responsible for bringing it about.

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There was a lack of cohesion amongst the members of the side that was unpleasantly apparent. It at times appeared as though the performers were trying to show how atrociously badly they could play.

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I know that it was prophesied that if the ground were dry and hard it would be all in favour of the Fosse. While the fact may have been so I do not see why the argument should apply altogether. If the present players cannot perform satisfactorily on a dry ground, let the authorities get some who can.

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The smartness of the Fosse was a splendid foil to the ineptitude of the losers. The Leicester forwards exhibited first-rate form, and their combination was at times extremely pretty. The defence was excellent also.

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On the home side McEwen was about the only man who seemed to me worthy of praise. Had his comrades infused some of his dash into their display it would have been better for the game and more enjoyable to the spectators.

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I am overlooking the match on Good Friday morning between the Reserves and a team of Luton League players. The result ought not to be accepted as indicative of the strength of the League, for the side on which the League authorities had ultimately to rely was by no means representative. On the other hand the Reserves were very strong.

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There was not a very large muster at Saturday afternoon's match; the disaster of Friday had already had its effect. Many of those who were present did not see the match through, and all those who did were disgusted.

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It is true that the team was mainly composed of Reserves; but in the rearguard were Williams, McCartney, Birch, Docherty and Perrins, while Little and Coupar were amongst the forwards. The side as it was constituted ought to have given a better account of itself.

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Not for many a long day have I been so weary of a game. The show by the homesters was simply shocking, and the discredit becomes all the more glaring when it is considered that South Bank were by no means extra formidable.

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It is a relief to come to deal with a game from which some amusement could be extracted. This was the match between the Falcons and Bedford Queen's in the Beds. Cup final on Monday morning. There was plenty of fun.

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Both sides were composed of triers and there was some very good mid-field play, though neither lot were great shakes at shooting. My opinion about the game was that though the Falcon deserved to win they were not the best team.

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Fancy the Falcon emerging from the contest as champions of Bedfordshire! They are but third on the Luton League table and yet they rise superior to better known combinations. It is all very amusing. At the same time the winners are a plucky side and I congratulate them most heartily.

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On Easter Monday afternoon we had the felicity of securing a couple of Second League points; but let me whisper that had the Darwen players been anything like so smart as the Fosse we should not have done. There was a slight improvement in the form of the homesters as compared with that of Friday—but not very much.

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During the first half it was an exhibition of "how not to do it." The homesters at their best would have piled up a dozen goals against the Darwenians and here they were crying content with a quarter of that number. It is incomprehensible to me.

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Gallacher and McInnes were in very fine form forward and Coupar was a fairly efficient substitute for Donaldson, who was standing down with an injured ankle. The other forwards were of very little use indeed.

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Of the halves Docherty was once more best, while McEwen was grand at back. Some of McCartney's kicks were well-judged, while a shot which he sent in at one stage was a beauty.

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Of the losers one cannot say very much that is complimentary—for the very good reason that they did not deserve it. They had openings enough in all conscience, and had they possessed but ordinary ability they must have scored several goals.

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So far as the Second League is concerned it is impossible now to score over 32 points and from what we have seen lately and the knowledge that the game is on the last day of the season it may be that we shall fail at Blackpool.

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Frankly, it seems as though we shall finish with 30 points, a great come down from the 36 which I suggested some weeks since. But who would have imagined that the conquerors of Burnley, Newcastle and Manchester would have failed so ignominiously against such comparatively small fry as Small Heath and Leicester? I for one did not.

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My reflections are tinged with some bitterness when I think of the way in which the season is ending. It is discouraging to the directors and disappointing to the shareholders. At one period there was good prospect of finishing at the lowest fourth; but as it is now we shall be half way down the list.

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One would not suggest that that is a dishonourable position to occupy in a first season; far from that. But the promise of better things was so good as to justify us in expecting that we should finish higher up the table.

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There is a good deal of talk going on as to the signing on and some very plain speaking has been heard. From what I can hear it seems to be a case of those

who are wanted not caring very much to stay, while those who are to be dispensed with are anxious to continue—a fact which is understandable.

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Recent displays have proved conclusively that there does exist great need for the infusion of new blood into the team and the public voice has it that the newcomers must be young and capable. Two very good recommendations if they are allied in individual players.

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All through the season there has been apparent a weakness at certain spots in the team. What are wanted are an outside left, some sturdy halves, and one more back. As the matter stands there exists the frame-work for a first-class team; but until some change takes place the side will never attain to very high rank.

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Look at the Small Heath team. It is composed almost wholly of young men, and both at Birmingham and Luton these evinced an ability to run the Luton defenders off their legs. There is no reason why the 'stripes' defence should not equal the forward string in point of smartness. At present it is patent to all observers that they do not.

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My position in the matter is that I have no wish to hamper the directors by any remarks which might at this juncture be out of place; but at the same time it is well to speak plainly at times. Had this been done a little more often in the past much heartburning and disappointment would have been saved.

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The Reserves again fared badly on Tuesday afternoon, the visitors being St. Albans. The winners were very much superior to their opponents and thoroughly deserved their success. There was an all-round smartness that greatly pleased me.

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On Tuesday evening came the most agreeable announcement that we have received during the whole of the holiday season—that the Lutonians had succeeded at Loughboro' and had thereby made the championship of the United League secure. This brought their total of successes up to 12 in 14 engagements and their points to 26 in a possible 30.

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I had made up my mind that failure or success depended upon the outcome of the meeting of the Loughboro' and Luton teams, (apart from the Southampton and Arsenal fixture) for I had concluded that failure at Loughboro' would have been followed by a like performance against the Arsenal. It is a great gratification to me to know that we are safe out of the wood ere the time for meeting the Arsenal.

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My heartiest congratulations are extended to the victors. I am not going to indulge in rhodomontade; but will simply content myself with saying that the men have fairly won the honour. It is certain that their performance will be duly appreciated by football enthusiasts hereabouts.

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It was but fitting that Luton should head the list this season. They had to play second fiddle to Millwall a year ago and the East Enders this season have only managed to compile 12 points in 16 games, less than half those of Luton in fewer games. Let it not be overlooked, either, that Luton beat Millwall in both League matches.

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Now as to to-morrow's game. Although the championship is certain, I hope the "stripes" will exert themselves to the full and so improve their position. They have to atone in some measure for that egregious failure on October 2, when they succumbed by a couple of goals to none.

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The Luton record to date is:—Played 55; won, 31; lost, 17; drawn, 7; goals for 139, against 76.

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A Bedford paper says: The Queen's Works Club journeyed to Luton on Monday to play and conquer the Falcons in the final of the Bedfordshire Cup. So sure were they of victory that, according to Miles's boy, a break and a band of music were engaged to meet them at the Midland Station on their return, and we may imagine the martial strains of "See the conquering heroes come," and the enormous crowds that would have followed in their wake, cheering along the streets of Bedford—had it come off, but it didn't. Alas and alack! The Bedford invincibles were beaten by a goal to nil, and the orders referred to were countermanded.

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Woolwich Arsenal came a cropper at Southampton on Wednesday, when they lost by three goals to none.