

FOOTBALL.

LUTON TOWN v. WOOLWICH ARSENAL.

LUTON'S FIRST LEAGUE DEFEAT.

A DISAPPOINTING SHOW.

On Saturday the Woolwich Arsenal team journeyed to Luton in order to play the first of the two Second League games with the Town Club. The encounter had evoked the utmost interest at both Woolwich and Luton and speculation was rife as to the probable outcome. There was no means of gauging the form of the men, for the only team that both had met was Gainsborough Trinity, when both Luton and Woolwich triumphed by four goals to none. Prior to Saturday Luton had played three League games, of which two had been won and one drawn, so that the Lutonians had five League points to their credit out of a possible six. The Arsenal had played six games, of which two were won, one drawn and the remaining three lost, so that the "reds" had only five points to their credit. Preparations were made by the home executive for a large crowd, the price of admission to the stand being raised and an enclosure constructed on the terraces. In the forenoon a couple of excursion trains conveyed several hundreds of Arsenal supporters to Luton, where the behaviour of the visitors was boisterous and offensive in the extreme. It ought to be added that the Woolwich team had been re-cast owing to injuries, a couple of half-backs coming into the forward rank. On the home side Ekins stood down in favour of Little, the cause being that the outside left had not recovered from an injury sustained a fortnight since. The feeling in this locality was that the game would probably result in the success of the homesters, though it was at the same time considered that the match would be closely contested.

Half an hour before the time fixed for kicking off there was a goodly muster of spectators round the ropes. On the terraces were hundreds of Arsenal supporters, flaunting the red ribbons, and inspired by a concertina and banjo. The grand-stand bore a large complement of onlookers also. As time went on visitors arrived in large batches and presently the terraces became quite a sea of faces, while the stand was crowded. The Red Cross Band took up a position in front of the stand and delighted the crowd with a capital rendering of some English airs. By and bye the Arsenal players took the field attired in their red and white uniform and looking a smart set of fellows, while the Lutonians followed shortly after in white. Neither side could grumble at its reception, for both were extremely heartily cheered. Crawford and Stewart indulged in the customary preliminary, with the result that the former won the toss. Then the following took up their respective positions and the fun commenced:—

Luton: Goal, Williams; backs, McCartney and McEwen; half-backs, Davies, Stewart and Docherty; forwards, Gallacher and Coupar (right wing), Clark (centre), McInnes and Little (left wing).

Woolwich Arsenal: Goal, Ord; backs, McAuley and Caldwell; half-backs, Anderson, Farrell and Davis; forwards, Brock and Crawford (right wing), McAvey (centre), White and Haywood (left wing).

Referee: Mr. E. J. Carpenter (Leicester). Neutral linesmen: Messrs. Brierley (Leicester) and W. J. Wilson (Surrey F.A.).

The loss of the toss was not very material, as there was little wind. Luton started from the railway end, Clark kicking off punctually. The Arsenal at once went down in force, but Stewart relieved, and Clark dispatched a hot one at the "reds" goal which was neatly negotiated by Ord. Again the homesters were seen at the visitors' extremity; but McEwen miskicked and so let in the Arsenal right wingers. These advanced capitally with the result that McAvoy, who was in a good position, shot over. Davis was punished for fouling Coupar and Clark sent in splendidly, Coupar finishing up the attack by kicking over the goal-line when the Arsenal defenders returned the ball. White collided with McCartney with some violence, with the result that the Arsenalite was unable to resume for a minute or two. The "reds" forced a corner which was not improved upon, Gallacher securing and getting away well. McCartney cleared from a long shot and Docherty followed suit when the visitors again attacked. Crawford shot wide at the home end, following which McCartney distinguished himself by effecting a wonderful clearance. Little centred cleverly, but Clark found it impossible to get to the ball. Coupar was penalised for setting a back for an adversary, and the same player soon afterwards sent into touch with a long pass which was intended for Little. The referee here gave an indication of what was to be expected later on; he awarded a foul against McCartney, but after consultation with the linesman he reversed this decision. Haywood was responsible for a splendid shot which Williams tipped over the bar. The resultant corner produced another flag-kick, McEwen putting behind his own line. A decision for off-side against the strangers at length relieved the pressure. It was not long, however, before the Royalists made another incursion into the enemy's confines, McCartney kicking heavily into touch in the effort to deal effectually with the ball. More dashing play by the "reds" was witnessed and Haywood was pulled up by McCartney, though a corner followed. From this the ball was lodged on the net. The homesters were stopped for fouling and Docherty was jeered at by the Woolwich supporters for kicking into touch when hard pressed. McCartney gave away another corner, and a very determined attack was indulged in by the Arsenal. For a space the home lot defended well, the ball bobbing about in front of Williams for several seconds; but ultimately it came out to Davis who sent it into the net at a great pace, the shot giving the custodian no chance whatever. This success was obtained by the visitors when play had been in progress about a quarter of an hour, and it was enthusiastically received by the Woolwich contingent. It was thoroughly deserved, indeed. In the next minute Gallacher very narrowly missed equalising, his shot being very swift if a trifle wide. At the home end the ball skimmed the bar and a corner was awarded, the homesters clearing well. Anderson was stopped for fouling and Davis evoked a roar of derision by deliberately kicking Coupar. From the free-kick which followed Stewart sent over the cross-bar. Another foul, this time on Stewart, beat back the leaders, who kicked into touch in order to prevent the locals from scoring. Caldwell saved magnificently from Coupar and Haywood was pulled up for off-side. A long effort by Clark was easily cleared, while off-side stopped Gallacher when it appeared that that player had a good opening. McEwen cleared brilliantly and at the Arsenal end Luton forced a corner, Ord's charge having a very narrow escape of being captured, the forwards combining fairly well on this occasion. A very fine volley by Davies did not very materially assist the locals. Farrell sent out with a long attempt, and Anderson cleared well from Little. Williams came out and cleared his lines, while the referee pulled up the Arsenal for handling when Little had got well under weigh. Ord was called upon to save after this, and the visitors were again checked by a foul on McCartney, McAvoy shortly after being adjudged off-side. Docherty conceded a corner, Williams saving from Davis as the result. Gallacher placed fairly well, and McAuley cleared a good one from the foot of Little. The home lot attacked strenuously later on and lodged the ball on the net. A corner followed, from which Docherty steered behind the line. Ord dealt cleverly with a hot one from Coupar, an unproductive corner falling to Luton as the result. The "reds" pressed for a time; but free-kicks for infractions of the rules beat them back, and a corner accrued to the "stripes." From this Little headed in well and a great shout went up from the home spectators, the ball appearing to go through. To the chagrin of the locals a goal-kick was awarded. The interval arrived shortly afterwards, when the positions were:

ARSENAL, 1; LUTON, 0.

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The Arsenal lost no time in getting going at the commencement of the second half, for in the first minute they sent behind at the home end. McInnes secured cleverly but shot badly, following which the leaders kicked into touch. Following a foul by Docherty McAuley placed well and Williams cleared at the cost of a corner. Caldwell was laughed at for kicking into touch. Next Haywood secured and beat Williams and it seemed that the lead of the Arsenal had been increased. Once more the referee consulted the linesman, however, with the result that the goal was disallowed on the score of off-side. McCartney sent over the Arsenal line with a huge punt and a foul against the Lutonians came next. The referee pulled up Luton for playing on the ball precipitately when he had bounced it down and from the free-kick Williams punched out well. Docherty was punished for illegally throwing over an opponent, while a further foul was awarded against the Arsenal. From this Docherty sent in excellently and the Woolwich defenders were lucky in saving. Crawford sent wide across the goal when he seemed to have an easy chance. Receiving from McEwen McInnes sent in well and the ball bounced about in front of goal for some time, Ord at length effecting a marvellous clearance. Emboldened by this the Lutonians came again with a rattle and a good deal of difficulty was experienced by the Arsenal defence in repulsing the attack. At the home end the visiting forwards were stopped for off-side while a foul on Little was further awarded. Gallacher narrowly missed with a capable overhead kick, McAvoy sent behind weakly, and when a brilliant centre had been credited to Gallacher the Arsenal centre man once more kicked erratically. A foul against McCartney did not bring much advantage to the "reds," the ball finding its way behind the home line. Good play was subsequently witnessed on the Arsenal right, following which Little was nastily pulled about by McAuley, though the left winger succeeded in forcing a corner from which Clark almost managed to put the sides on an equality. A tremendous shot from Gallacher was unfruitful, as was a further strong attack by the homesters, Ord saving exceedingly well. Gallacher was the victim of a bad foul and after minor breakages of the rules Haywood nastily fouled McCartney, the referee creating some amusement by throwing up the ball. Gallacher misdirected the ball badly, and Davies sent behind when the Arsenal had been pulled up for more fouling. Haywood shortly after headed through prettily; but the referee was of opinion that he was off-side and accordingly disallowed the point. Later on Stewart shot beautifully and the effort was as brilliantly saved. Some laughter was created by a trick on the part of Docherty which escaped the notice of the officials; the left half was on the ground and deliberately handled the ball by thrusting it forward. Haywood once more tested Williams with a hot shot. Towards the close the "stripes" struggled gamely to avert defeat; but their efforts were characterised by a lack of combination

which was as surprising as it was annoying. Despite their utmost efforts they found themselves unable to break through the stout defence which was opposed to them. The Woolwich team were more fortunate, for just prior to the call of time McAvoy eluded the defenders and steered the ball into the net. The outcome was thus a somewhat unexpected though thoroughly deserved victory for the Arsenal with the following scores:

ARSENAL, 2; LUTON, 0.

FOOTBALL FACTS AND FANCIES.

Arsenal, 2; Luton, 0. This is the unwelcome result on which one has to hang some sort of explanation of the failure of the Luton team on Saturday. My readers will know from experience that I hate apologising for bad form, and yet the fact that the "stripes" had performed so well hitherto demands that I should endeavour to account for the defeat.



Briefly, then, the better team on the day's play won. Of that there can be no shadow of doubt. Yet I make bold to aver that five times out of six there would not be found such a pronounced disparity between the sides. On this occasion the Arsenal were in splendid form, while the Lutonians were—well, it was not that kind of form that won at Newton Heath.



The victory of the strangers was all the more surprising to me when their previous performances were borne in mind. Prior to the game my confidence in the ability of the locals to win was so strong that the probability of defeat was not seriously in my mind. What transpired was accordingly all the more of a knock down blow to my hopeful feelings.



One cannot explain away the defeat, nor do I propose to try. All the explanation in the world will not get rid of the unpleasant fact that two League points have been captured from us on our own ground, and that by a team that we had regarded with feelings of pity for unfortunate displays. The boot is now on the other leg with a vengeance.



It was not that the one side had all the luck and the other all the play. The "reds" fairly deserved their triumph by a display which was of all-round excellence. They even seemed to me entitled to at least one of the two goals which were disallowed.



It is true that the homesters had hard luck at times, yet even making allowance for that they did not deserve to win. Their show was vastly inferior to that of the victors, whom I desire to congratulate on a splendid performance. To score what were virtually four goals to Luton's blank was undoubtedly a great achievement.



My commiseration is reserved for the locals. That they tried hard at times is undeniable; but in almost every instance they threw away their openings by erratic passing which had the result of placing the ball

at the toe of an opponent. Rarely have I seen the "stripes" so much at sea, and certainly never against such a team as I take the Arsenal to be.

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Let me utter a comment upon the behaviour of the "reds'" supporters. It is true the excursion trains which ran from Woolwich had the effect of swelling the "gate"; but though the visitors were welcome in a monetary sense they were assuredly not from the point of view of their conduct.

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I should be sorry indeed if the Luton crowd behaved so badly away from home. In the forenoon groups of the wearers of red favours paraded the streets with instruments of music, and they succeeded in making themselves a great nuisance to the quiet-loving townsfolk. On the ground they were easily distinguishable by their boisterous shouts. Not even the melodious strains of the Red Cross Band had the effect of silencing their noise.

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The "gate" was large; but the proceeds were not quite so good as had been anticipated. The amount taken was something over £138, which was only fairly satisfactory when allowance is made for the largeness of the crowd who came from Woolwich.

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Coming to speak of the play, one can only roundly declare that on the day's form the winners were head and shoulders superior to the locals. Even the Luton players were fain to confess that they had met their superiors, which is a confession indeed.

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The visitors went off with admirable spirit, and throughout they shaped as a winning team should. By the greatest stretch of good feeling one could not conclude that the Lutonians ever looked like winning. Both attack and defence were ragged and unreliable, whereas on the whole the "reds" were dependable.

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The scoring of the first goal seemed to infuse additional determination into the Woolwich players, and thereafter we saw them at their best. It has been said that the Arsenal did not display their tip-top form; but with all due respect to those who express that idea I question whether the Royalists have shown anything nearly so good this season.

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"Say we can't play away from home" observed an enthusiastic partisan on the grand-stand. I would reply that at least one person present was not expecting anything like so good a display. It was quite good enough for most of the League sides, so far as I have been able to judge.

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Of course the weakness of the referee did much towards spoiling the play. Mr. Carpenter was, I am informed, very unwell and that may to some extent condone some very obvious mistakes which he was responsible for during the afternoon.

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One of the worst of these was when Haywood scored what was adjudged to be an off-side point. The referee pointed to the centre of the field and then consulted the linesman, with the result that the point was disallowed. It is not surprising that the Arsenal players were dissatisfied.

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Later on the hesitancy on the part of the official became more pronounced and the linesmen were called into consultation with irritating frequency. This not unnaturally annoyed the crowd, both sets of partisans resenting it very strongly.

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I have said that the form of the Arsenal came as a revelation to me. A strong forward set were supported by a splendid defence, and there was little fault to find. The Arsenal, indeed, played a hard, determined game, and from start to finish the pace was made a cracker.

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cracker.

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Amongst the forwards I think first place is claimed by Haywood, who gave a very fine display indeed. His wing-mate ably seconded his efforts. The centre man was not perfection so far as shooting was concerned, though his mid-field play was admirable. The right wingers gave the home defence plenty of trouble.

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The "reds'" halves were a splendid trio, though Davis marred an otherwise good show by indulging in many condemnatory acts. The backs were a grand pair and the highest praise is due to Ord for a very fine exposition in goal.

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On the home side Williams gave a performance that prevented the score from mounting rapidly, as it must have done with a less capable custodian in charge. He was not to be blamed for letting two shots score.

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The home backs and halves were not by any means at their best. To my mind Davies and Stewart were the pick of the basket. Even the former indulged in some methods which can only be described as extremely reprehensible, while he did not last well.

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The forwards were singularly ineffective. Clark shot well and fed his men carefully; but he was not supported as he should have been. It was not his fault that better results did not accrue; indeed, I learn that many formed a good opinion of him from his exhibition. Of that I am glad.

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McInnes combined well at times with the centre man; but for the rest he had little chance. Gallacher put in some neat centres occasionally and Coupar managed to shoot sometimes, when he was not being fouled by Davis. Little was not very conspicuous.

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The Luton display was not only painfully ragged and the combination poor, but it seemed that almost every pass went straight to an opponent. This is not what we expect from the homesters. They were very much excited; indeed, at one time the only man who was playing with his customary coolness was Davies.

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I am not going to whine over the loss of two points nor am I going to "slate" the players wholesale, for that will do no good; but I must point out with all the emphasis in my power that such form as Saturday's will not do for the Second League. If we are to lower our colours so readily to a team like Woolwich, what is to take place when we journey to Burnley, Newcastle, Manchester and other Northern places?

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It may be that we are to witness a better show to-morrow at Woolwich. I heartily hope so, for I was ashamed of the display of Saturday last. Many are of opinion that the result will be reversed. My hope is that it may be so; but my good sense leads me to think it highly improbable.

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There is sure to be a big crowd at Woolwich and a goodly number will go up from Luton. A special train is being run for the convenience of these, as will be seen by the bills about the streets.

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After Saturday's games the Second League table stood thus:—

	Plyd.	Won	Drn.	Lost	Goals For	Goals Agst.	Pts.
Manchester City	6	6	0	0	19	3	12
Burnley	6	5	1	0	20	4	11
Small Heath	5	4	1	0	10	4	9
Newcastle United	5	4	0	1	13	9	8
Newton Heath	5	4	0	1	13	2	8
Grimsby Town	6	3	1	2	14	10	7
Woolwich Arsenal	7	3	1	3	14	16	7
Luton	4	2	1	1	7	4	7
Darwen	5	2	1	2	8	13	5
Gainsboro' Trinity	6	2	0	4	8	16	4
Leicester Fosse	4	0	2	2	2	5	2
Loughborough	5	1	0	4	3	11	2
Burton Swifts	5	1	0	4	6	14	2
Lincoln City	5	0	1	4	8	17	1
Blackpool	5	0	1	4	3	13	1
Walsall	5	0	0	5	8	13	0

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The following is the Luton and District League table to date:—

	Pld.	Won.	Drn.	Lost.	Goals For	Goals Agst.	Pts.
Stanley	3	3	0	0	19	2	6
Leagrave	3	2	0	1	8	4	4
Falcon	2	1	1	0	3	3	3
Stanville	2	1	0	1	8	8	2
Caddington	1	0	1	0	3	3	1
Dunstable R.	1	0	0	1	0	3	0
Houghton	2	0	0	2	2	9	0
Dunstable St.							
Peter's	2	0	0	2	2	15	0
Star	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

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I learn that the Luton team for the match at Woolwich to-morrow will have Perrins at right-half, Little at centre and Ekins outside left, the other positions being filled as on Saturday last.

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Luton's record to date: Played, 8; won, 5; drawn, 2; lost, 1; goals for 17, against 5.