

THE ENGLISH CUP COMPETITION.

LUTON TOWN v. WATFORD.

Played at Luton on Saturday. Result:—

Luton Town 2 goals.

Watford 2 goals.

The teams were as follow:—

Luton: Perkins, goal; Dow and Williams, backs; W. Ford, Sharp and C. Ford, half-backs; Durrant, Komplay, Galbraith, Hewitt and Brock, forwards.

Watford: Baker, goal; Sharp and Cother, backs; Wood, Robins and Marsh, half-backs; Hare, Slaughter, Beach, McNee and Hill, forwards.

Referee, Mr. B. M. Lockyer; linesmen, Messrs. R. Fuller and J. Wilson.

When I said last week that Luton would have to play for all they were worth to work their way into the next round of the Cup Competition, I really had but little idea of how well Watford could play, and I certainly had no conception of the depths of mediocrity to which Luton could descend. Well for my peace of mind that I was in that position, for this was decidedly a case in which ignorance was bliss. Of course, it was exceedingly unfortunate that McInnes and Hains were unable to take their places, but even when every possible allowance is made for their absence, one is yet compelled to say that the exhibition of the Luton team was inexplicably bad.

Saturday was not the best of days for football, the rain which set in about mid-day not only interfering very greatly with the comfort of the spectators but also doing a lot to spoil the play. The crowd, however, was one of the biggest seen on the ground this season, numbering fully four thousand persons, of whom about a thousand came from Watford, three or four hundred from St. Albans, and a good many others from the surrounding district.

New stock of new autumn and winter suitings, trouserings and overcoatings, are now on show. All the newest tints and shades. A grand selection of materials. A trial solicited.—S. Bassett, practical tailor, 29, Wellington-street.—[ADVT.]

Luton won the toss, and luck certainly favoured them at the start, for Robins, the Watford centre-half, did not turn up till some minutes after the game had been in progress. The homesters, however, had not done much up to that time, beyond taking two or three ineffective shots at goal. Then Watford took a turn, and Perkins had to save a beauty. Luton responded, and from a throw-in the ball was put in front of goal, where, after a failure by Komplay, Galbraith or Brock got in a shot, but Baker cleared beautifully.

For a time Luton had rather the better of some very scrambling play, but for a long while they were quite unable to get any decided advantage. Then the left wing got away, the ball was swung across the mouth of goal, and after two or three had tried in vain to kick it, Durrant succeeded in putting on the finishing touch. It had taken Luton just twenty-three minutes to get this goal, but having once tasted blood, it seemed that they were going to put a little more sting into their work, for after the return to the half-way line they at once made tracks for the Watford citadel, and Baker kicked out a hot shot from W. Ford. Then Hewitt sent in again, and Baker let the ball slip well into goal, but pulled it out and turned it round the post. It was an admirable bit of bluff and it succeeded, the referee giving a corner.

Nothing came from this, but from a foul against Watford, Williams placed and another corner resulted. Hewitt took the kick, and Sharp, of Watford, in his anxiety to clear, fisted the ball. A penalty was awarded, and the Luton people were reserving their cheers for another goal, when, to their consternation and to the immense delight of the Watford contingent, William Ford sent the ball flying high over the bar. The visitors next had a look-in, but their efforts were frustrated by Williams and Perkins, and Luton going away forced a corner, after which Baker had all his work cut out to save a splendid shot from C. Ford.

During the next ten minutes the play was about evenly divided, but at length Galbraith, who was the only Luton forward showing anything like decent form, made a grand effort to beat the two backs, and actually succeeded, but Cother, not being able to stop him by any other means, held on to him and spoiled his shot. The spectators appealed for a penalty, but a corner only was awarded, and this was not turned to account. Luton made several other fruitless efforts, and then Williams, in attempting to stop Beach, who had changed places with Hare, fell down, the consequence being that the Watford man had plenty of time to get in his centre. Perkins saved once, but Beach put in again, and Hare scored.

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It was now close upon half-time, and the teams crossed over with honours easy. The second half opened in a very sensational manner, Watford going away on the right and Beach putting in a centre from which Hare gave them the lead, beating Perkins with a good shot. The Watford people cheered frantically, and I am afraid these cheers took all the heart out of the Luton men. Just as the visitors acquired more confidence, so the Luton players became more and more hopelessly demoralised, and the spectators were treated to the spectacle of a Second League team being completely outplayed by the representatives of the second division of the Southern League.

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As time went on the chances of Luton retrieving their fortunes seemed to get more and more remote. And if they had been left to their own resources, I don't suppose they ever would have equalised. One of the Watford men, however, came to their rescue. Marsh, who had been indulging in a good deal of shady work, fouled Durrant rather badly, and Dow taking the kick, put in a beauty, the ball glancing in the net off the head of Hill. The home supporters, thankful for small mercies, cheered vociferously, and conjured up the hope of a repetition of the Walsall affair. But it was not to be. Luton certainly did put a little more spirit into their play, but the finish arrived without any further alteration, and the game was therefore drawn at two goals all.

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There is no doubt that Watford are a lot better team than Luton people fancied. That they are altogether superior to the class in which they usually play is shown by their goal record, as up till Saturday they had not only won all ten of the matches played, but had scored nity-three goals against three. The left wing is a pretty smart one, Hare is a capital man at centre—better there, in fact, than at outside-right, and Beach, on the other hand, seemed to do better at outside than at centre. The halves are good but not over scrupulous, and both backs play a sound game, though Cother, like the men in front of him, is apt to indulge in shady tactics. Baker, who is an amateur of the pure type, never taking a penny even for his expenses, gave a good exhibition between the sticks.

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But what shall I say of Luton? There is only one thing that can be said, so far as I can see, and that is that their display was simply excruciating. Galbraith, whose inclusion had caused a good many misgivings, was not only the best of the forwards, but was the only man in the team, bar Perkins perhaps, to play a really good game. He did indeed perform in first-rate style, and deserves to be congratulated upon keeping his head when everybody about him seemed to be quite at sea. The greatest failure in the forward line was Kemplay, who, since his illness, appears to be going from bad to worse, and I suppose it was largely due to his ineffectiveness that Durrant was seen to so little advantage. The left wingers were fair, but not by any means brilliant.

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The halves were once more terribly weak, and whilst they were frequently after the ball they were very seldom on it. Why is this? Simply because they always delay their effort until their opponents obtain possession of the leather. They seem to forget that it is much easier to prevent a man getting the ball than to rob him after he has got it. The backs appeared to be affected by the general weakness. Williams, who tired very much in the second portion of the game, often tackled well, but was not able to recover himself quickly enough after stopping his man. Dow was likewise a lot below his usual form,

but Perkins gave nothing away in goal. The slippery state of the ground and the ball no doubt had a lot to do with the indifferent display of the men, but I don't know that Luton can derive much satisfaction from that, seeing that Watford had just the same difficulties to contend with.

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The refereeing was very poor, and I think Mr. Lookyer's shortcomings were not only the means of robbing Luton of one or two goals in the first half, but also of giving Watford their first point. As it was, Luton on the play ought to have changed ends with a lead of two or three goals, but in the second half they were, in everything except the score, a beaten and demoralised team.