

FOOTBALL.

LUTONIANS THRASHED AT SMALL HEATH

A TERRIBLE SMASH-UP.

Despite the extraordinary collapse of the Lutonians at Wellingborough last week it was considered likely that against a better class team such as Small Heath they would perform better. Here is the commentary: The "stripes" visited Birmingham on Saturday and met the "Heathens" with the outcome that they were despoiled of a brace of League points and had nine goals chalked up against them without being able to respond. On the Luton side Williams was given a rest and Dow played at right back, while Hewitt went to inside left and Ekins resumed at outside. The Small Heath team was somewhat different from that of recent Saturdays, Walton being removed to the half-back line from amongst the forwards while a reserve named Gardner was given a trial at inside right. There was a crowd of about 4,000 and the weather was very unpleasant.

The sides were:—

Small Heath: Goal, Clutterbuck; backs, Archer and Pratt; half-backs, Walton, Leake, and Robertson; forwards, Inglis and Gardner, (right) M'Roberts, (centre) Abbot and Wharton (left).

Luton Town: Goal, Perkins; backs, Dow and Moore; half-backs, C. Ford, W. Ford and Crump; forwards, Durrant and M'Innes, (right), Galbraith, (centre), Hewitt and Ekins (left).

Referee, Mr. T. Armitt (Leek).

The Lutonians started operations and pressed in the early portion of the game; but the home backs relieved. Later on the "Heathens" advanced and from a centre by Wharton Gardner succeeded in scoring the first goal. Durrant and Galbraith became conspicuous for good passing and the visitors found it possible to make considerable headway; but Leake returned and Moore in a struggle near the Luton goal kicked into the net and thus presented his opponents with a second notch. The visitors broke away on several occasions, but they were invariably repelled, though the forwards did not show at all to advantage. Wharton put on the third goal and Inglis a fourth, so that at the interval the score read:

SMALL HEATH, 4; LUTON, 0.

The strangers showed far better style after the interval and early in the second half "Gally" skimmed the bar. The brilliancy of the Lutonians was but spasmodic, however, and it was not long before the home lot were again engaged in attacking. Perkins executed a good deal of work, and one of his saves in particular was marvellous. Inglis was responsible for the fifth goal, that player having meanwhile scored an "off sider." Robertson scored the sixth from a scrimmage and the same executant succeeded in obtaining the seventh with a splendid long shot. An eighth came from the same player, and Gardner added the ninth. Thus at the close the Lutonians had been badly beaten as follows:

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badly beaten as follows:
SMALL HEATH, 9; LUTON, 0.

The *Athletic News* report says: "Most of us in Birmingham who interest ourselves in football are finding it a difficult matter to reckon up the Small Heath team this season. In one game they do all that their most pronounced admirer could wish, and visions of probable promotion at the season's end are conjured up by their smart display; then they go away to meet opponents whose record is not to be compared with their own, and everything is knocked on the head by 'the usual defeat' (that's how some folk put it). For my part, and it is an opinion I have expressed before, I feel convinced that a team which can beat Newton Heath by four goals to one and Luton by nine to none, to quote only two instances, should be worth more than 11 points out of 20, and, despite the local anonymous correspondent who has been very much en evidence in the daily papers during this week, I am of opinion that the team, as a whole, is good enough to carry Small Heath to a much higher position in the Second Division than they occupy to-day. Why have they not done so, then? my readers may ask. That is a question which is probably puzzling the Small Heath directors as much as anyone, and the sooner it is settled and remedied the better. I feel certain, in my own mind, that there is a screw loose somewhere, and I trust, as I am sure all supporters of the club must do, that the committee will leave no stone unturned in their endeavour to find out the cause of this trouble, and take vigorous measures to effect its removal. After this long preamble, Mr. Editor, perhaps you think it time for me to say something about Saturday's game. Luton were the visitors to Coventry-road, and as they brought a good team with them there seemed every prospect of an interesting match, but the men from the Bedfordshire borough put a very sorry figure indeed, at least, in the scoring line. Starting early with a good goal from the foot of Gardner, a recruit at inside right from the Reserves, and 'Heathens' popped on goal after goal until the number reached the record figure of nine for English League matches this season. As may be readily imagined, the local side were 'dead on the spot,' and though this heavy score was registered there was much more play in midfield than the result would indicate, the Luton men failing chiefly when they reached the sturdy backs of Small Heath. Beyond congratulating the victors on a capital all-round display, and expressing the pleasure which the big improvement in the forward line afforded me I will forego the customary criticism. As a noteworthy fact it may be mentioned that Robertson, from half-back, scored three of the five goals registered in the second half. Next Saturday we are to have the conquerors of Walsall in the English Cup at Coventry-road, when, no doubt, some interest will be evinced in a team that was capable of this performance. Small Heath, if wise, will take a hint from Walsall's downfall."

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The *Morning Leader*, heading its report "Luton's tale of woe," writes: "I think Small Heath are a better team than Luton; if figures prove anything they certainly are. But the probability is that if the two clubs met in home-and-home matches 20 times this season Small Heath would never win by more than 4—at the outside 5—goals to nil. Luton were beaten, smashed, pulverised. They had very little of the attack at any time, and when the forwards did get away some of the men showed a frantic desire to give a less advantageously situated companion a chance of extricating himself out of a difficulty in which he need never have been placed. I am not enamoured of the overdone passing game. It is carried to excess, both in the Association and the Rugby code. I believe with Whelden, of Aston Villa, that if a man has a chance of shooting for goal his duty is to shoot, and not look round for a chance of proving his unselfishness. But perhaps it would be as well to begin at the beginning and cut the sermonising. Luton, so far as I could gather, had a good side. So had Small Heath, but owing to the shoddy nature of recent displays, they removed the veteran Walton from the forward to the half-back line, Dunlop being omitted from that rank, and Gardner (a reserve) being placed at inside right. It was a dank, muggy, gloomy afternoon, and the surface of the field was greasy. Small Heath won the toss, and the Luton team kicked off. It was one of the few effective kicks they did make during the opening half. Right from the start the local forwards would insist on monopolising the game, and, dropping all the aimlessness which has marked their play in recent weeks, they went for goal with a grim determination which would have done credit to the best eleven playing. Small Heath are not a reliable set, and some of their recent displays caused a not inconsiderable section of their supporters to fight shy of paying for admission to the Luton match. But when they once got going there was no holding them. As you may guess, it was a Bridgnorth election sort of game. It would be farcical to treat the match quite so seriously as the sides would seem to suggest that it should be treated because I am convinced that Luton's form was too bad to be true. Their defence struck me as being unreliable, but the men undoubtedly got disorganised, and lost their heads. The great mistake made in the earlier part of the game was that the backs would lie too close to goal. By doing this they lost the chance of combining with their halves, and, in addition, they hampered Perkins quite unnecessarily. Luton have yet to learn that combination in defence is quite as essential to success as combination in attack. The halves showed no outstanding merit; they did not tackle persistently enough to check the fast and clever line opposed to them. Neither of the backs shone, but their faults were faults of omission rather than commission. Durrant was the best of a forward line which never got the rust out of their bearings. Small Heath were brilliant in attack. Their forwards are very fleet, and had they more grit in them—for grit means consistency—they would win their way back into the First League. The right wing is faulty. The halves, who have been poor of late, plucked up considerably in this game, and the defence generally commanded admiration."

FOOTBALL FACTS AND FANCIES.

Last week, when alluding to the forthcoming match at Small Heath, I made the optimistic statement that it would not greatly surprise me if the "stripes" succeeded in obtaining one if not both points. Readers will understand why sarcastic ones have been carefully reminding me of the utterance all the week.



It ought to be said that the words were written while one was pleasantly glowing with the meritorious show against Burslem, and before the disaster at Wellingborough had chilled us through.



What happened at Small Heath is what no fellow can understand. What on earth the Lutonians were about I cannot for the life of me imagine. It is utterly inexplicable, and I am not going to attempt the impossible.



No doubt many will expect me to verbally flog the delinquents. What's the good? Criticism becomes wearisome and I really have not the heart to indulge in it. But it is pretty evident that there was a screw loose somewhere.



There was intense disappointment manifested in Luton when the unwelcome tidings came along and the posting of the telegram was greeted with some

hooting. There was no wonder, for those of us who do not select that method of expressing our feelings were equally chagrined.

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It has been whispered to me that the return journey was not so pleasant as it might have been. Some of the disappointed wights had been drowning their woes in the flowing bowl, and I am given to understand that there were some highly cantankerous exhibitions. It is all very pitiable.

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All sorts of rumours were going the round on Monday afternoon, and it was plainly hinted that certain persons were desirous of severing their connection with the club. I am not altogether surprised, for it is neither encouraging nor creditable to be connected with a team that is able to be thus soundly trounced. Why, it's as bad as Darwen.

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It was openly said that another such exhibition would be a death-blow to the club. Truth to tell, there does not appear to be much life in the organisation even now. Football was never at so low an ebb in the town since the club came into prominence.

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It is all very well blaming the public for withholding their support. I have been foremost in this in days gone by: but then the performances of the team were meritorious. It will scarcely be argued, I suppose, that that has been the case lately. Hence the lack of support.

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The most remarkable thing about the matter is the utter unreliability of the form. One day the team shows up well against such a side as Burslem, a couple of days later it collapses at Wellingborough, at the end of the week there is another disaster at Small Heath, and yet on the very next Monday comes a really brilliant victory over Southampton.

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Here is an extraordinary tangle. I am fain to confess that I do not know what to make of it. It is all very well to say the team cannot play; but we have had evidence to the contrary. Then what on earth is the matter? Echo answers "What?"

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Though there is justification for some despondency one would desire to say that matters are not altogether hopeless yet. With another re-arrangement the eleven may get into good form once more, and when it does public confidence will perhaps be restored. Until then it is a bad look out for the directors.

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An allusion to finance brings to mind the matter of the appeal in the Glossop transfers case. I am heartily glad that the Luton authorities won. They have plenty of ways of spending the money.

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Perhaps it would be useful to recall the circumstances of the case. When McEwen and his three comrades deserted and transferred their affections to Glossop £300 was claimed by Luton for the transfers. The League Committee fixed £200 as the amount to be paid and against this decision Luton appealed.

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The League appeal committee referred the matter back to the management committee, and the hearing took place on Friday, when both clubs produced witnesses. The outcome was that Glossop were ordered to pay the £300 which was claimed, and the deposit of £10 paid by Luton was returned; but the Southerners were mulcted in the costs because they did not produce the requisite witnesses at the first hearing.

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I am requested to announce that an anonymous donor has forwarded £5 towards defraying the costs of the appeal. The directors are wondering whether any others of their friends are desirous of emulating this worthy action.

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Saturday's Second League results:—Arsenal drew Loughborough 0—0; Small Heath beat Luton 9—0; Blackpool beat Lincoln 3—0; Newton Heath drew Barnsley 0—0; Walsall beat Gainsborough 6—1; Burton Swifts beat Darwen 4—0; Grimsby drew New Brighton 2—2; Leicester Fosse beat Port Vale 2—0; Manchester City beat Glossop North End 2—1.

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"Rover" writes: "Next season the Arsenal and Luton will, I hope, throw in their lot with the Southern League, and I predict a much better time for everyone concerned. Meanwhile poor little Luton are down in the dumps. I feel sorry for the plucky managers of the Bedfordshire professionals. Their last season's team deserted them, and they could not afford to pay the transfer fees for the talent they required. This is one of the blessings of belonging to the League!"

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I gather that the idea of abandoning the Second League is commending itself to many in Luton. There is no doubt that most of the Southern League sides just now would be quite strong enough for Luton. It is certain also that the Lutonians would be welcomed back.

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It is quite refreshing to be able to turn from Saturday's performance and to consider that of Monday. We had all made up our minds that the home "stripes" were to receive yet another thrashing, so that the unexpected victory was all the more welcome.

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It would be idle for me to argue that the better team won. Of course the better side on the day's play secured the victory; but it was evident that the seashore sides are a far more clever set of players than are the strawopolis champions.

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It was high time that we scored a win in the United League competition. Though the championship flag was flying on Monday, the record of the club showed that seven matches had been played in the competition without a single victory.

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The Lutonians gave a very praiseworthy show, especially considering that the brothers Ford were both injured. The introduction of Williams at centre half was accountable for a good deal of the cohesion that was noticeable, in welcome contrast to some recent displays.

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I was very pleased with the capital show which the Hitchin man gave us. His heading was splendid, while his kicking was very fine. He worked well in harmony with his forwards also.

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Hewitt was another player deserving of high commendation, for he played a very plucky game indeed. The backs were in capital form, while Perkins was a champion. I have been very sorry for the custodian lately, and hope he will take heart from Monday's success.

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The forwards were in dashing form. The right wingers were most conspicuous, and the way that Haynes and Robertson chose to stop Durrant as a rule was to foul him. They were both punished repeatedly for this—and deservedly so.

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Ekins was not a great success. Both the brothers Ford played excellently until they were injured, and I greatly admired W. G.'s pluck in sticking to his work even when he was partially incapacitated.

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As to the goals scored I have no doubt in my own mind that the second point granted to Luton should properly have been disallowed, for Robinson undoubtedly was unduly charged. But the goal obtained by McInnes which was refused a little later on balanced matters. It was a beauty and ought to have been given.

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I was somewhat disappointed with the Southampton team. True, the defence was grand, the rearguard being in fine fettle. But the forwards were not nearly so smart as I had imagined they would be. The outside wingers pleased me most.

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United League games: Tottenham beat Bristol City on Saturday by 2—1; Wellingborough beat the Arsenal on Monday by 3—0; Kettering drew with Reading on the same day.

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United League table to Tuesday:—

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The *Sportsman* remarks: "Football form is particularly deceptive. In the United League, for instance, Southampton have within a week fallen to Brighton and Luton, although the latter have experienced some rare 'drubbings'—to wit, at Small Heath last Saturday. Then Reading, after conquering Tottenham Hotspur, fail to lower the colours of Kettering. The Arsenal defeat Bristol City on the Westerners' enclosure—a most meritorious display, but then draw with Loughborough, one of the bottom clubs in the Second Division of the League, and actually have their number taken down at Wellingborough by 3-0."

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The following is from the *Sporting Life*: "W. Perkins, the Luton custodian, had a hard time of it in Birmingham on Saturday, when the ball was banged past him nine times. 'Poor old Perkins,' was shouted by the crowd on several occasions. Perkins has the making of a good man, his height being 6ft., while he is 12st. 2lb. in weight and only 22 years of age. He was secured by Luton from the Kettering club."

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I extract the following from a report of the Football Association meeting: "The question of the penalty kick again arose upon letters received from referees and others as to whether the circular issued last February governed Law 10, which awards a free kick for pushing, charging behind, tripping, kicking and holding. The circular stated that for 'unintentional' pushing, holding, and charging in the back by a defending player within the 12 yards line, the referee should award a free kick. Briefly, the question was whether there could be such things as accidental offences punishable by a free kick. It was decided to draw the attention of those asking for information to the February circular, as it contained the view the council held in the past, but the whole matter will be placed before the International Board between now and next season."

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The "Athletic Star" on Monday night had a clever and amusing cartoon on the condition of the Luton club. Here is the description which accompanies it:—"The 'Star' girl went down to Luton on Sunday (Luton had "gone down" on Saturday, nine to nothing, Small Heath), and "Gee," who followed, found her in tears over the fallen giant. "I can't bear to see him so broken down," she sobbed. "What are you giving him?" asked "Gee," "N-n-new milk," she said. "Huh!" said "Gee," "'taint new milk Luton wants, it's new blood!"

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R. Draper has been secured by the Queen's Works club at Bedford. Here is the way the *Bedford Record* refers to him: "A decided acquisition at centre forward has been obtained in R. Draper, who hails from Luton, where he has been assisting the Reserves. He is tricky and possesses speed, and when he settles down in his new surroundings should make things hum a bit."

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The matches in the first round of the competition proper for the Bedfordshire Cup are down for decision to-morrow (Saturday). The games are as follows, home teams being first-mentioned in each instance:—Leighton Printers v. Luton Reserves, Toddington v. Markyate, Leighton Cee Springs v. Luton Victoria, Caddington v. Luton Stanley, Bedford Queen's v. Dunstable Reserves, Bedford Town v. Luton United, and Sharnbrook v. Bedford Montrose.

FOOTER.