

Football.

THE LEAGUE. — DIVISION II.

LUTON TOWN v. GRIMSBY.

Played at Luton on Saturday. Result:—

Luton Town 3 goals.

Grimsby 1 goal.

* * *

The teams were as follow:—

Luton: Perkins, goal; Dow and Williams, backs; C. Ford, Sharp and Crump, half-backs; Durrant, McInnes, Kemplay, Hewitt and Ekins, forwards.

Grimsby: Bagshaw, goal; Mountain and Nidd, backs; Bell, Gray and Nelmes, half-backs; Jenkinson, Greenwood, Cockshutt, Rutcliffe, and Griffiths, forwards.

Referee, Mr. J. E. Carpenter.

It was with a very uncomfortable feeling of uncertainty that people turned their steps towards the Bury Park ground on Saturday, for though the Fishermen were not quite so high up in the League table as the men of straw, the absence of Moore from the ranks of the latter, and the consequent removal of Williams from the half-back line to the rear division, was enough to bring the teams on an equality, and to make the chances as near even as it was possible to have them.

And even chances are not what a man relishes on his own midden. Like the domineering bird who appreciates the privilege of crowing from his own lavender-heap, the average footballer dearly loves to think his club is going to win on its own ground. It is only when he goes away with the team that he lays to his soul the flattering unction of even chances.

In spite of the excellent weather which favoured the fixture, in spite, too, of the alluring strains of the Red Cross Band, the crowd reached only very moderate proportions, at no time numbering more than two thousand persons. And even these did not evince a great deal of enthusiasm at the outset, for things would persist in going wrong—as far as the Luton players were concerned.

I have already referred to the feeling of uncertainty which existed before the teams lined up. That feeling became a little more pronounced when the Fishermen, directly after the kick-off, made tracks for the Luton goal, and it grew in intensity when Griffiths, after a nice run screwed the ball across to Greenwood, who, however, was sufficiently compassionate to send high over the bar. This afforded a little relief, which was increased by a run to the other end, where Durrant sent behind. Things might have gone all right then, but for a foul by Charlie Ford in one of the most dangerous spots in the whole field.

Why do men foul? We know why they do sometimes, but I mean why do they do it when there is nothing to be gained thereby? I suppose an irresistible impulse comes over them to do something, and if they can't do the right thing, they take the only alternative that presents itself. But Grimsby did not waste time in speculations of this sort, for Mountain promptly took the kick, and from a scrimmage Griffiths placed the visitors one up with a shot which struck the crossbar and glanced into the net.

This was a decidedly unpromising start for the locals, and another slice of luck for the Lincolnshire men might have had a great influence on the rest of the game. Fortunately, however, the Lutonians now went about their work in a more business-like manner, Durrant leading the way with a corner, and afterwards putting in a centre from which Kemplay headed on to Bagshaw's fist.

Hewitt at this juncture was badly hurt by Nelmes, but was soon able to resume his place, and Luton then went at it with determination, Ekins first making the running and the others following on. Then came the psychological moment when that little bit of luck that I have spoken about might have done Grimsby a world of good. Jenkinson got away and sent the ball across the goal, and the spectators held their breath as Griffiths headed—happily just by the post.

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breath as Griffiths headed—happily just by the post.

That was really the only chance that Grimsby had of winning the game, and if it had been taken—well, perhaps it is hardly worth while to go into that. The opportunity had gone by never to return, for almost immediately Ekins sprinted up the field and swung the ball across to Durrant, who registered the equalising goal with a good shot.

There was some cheering at that, I can tell you, but it was as nothing compared with the outburst which took place two or three minutes later, when Ekins, receiving the ball from Crump, ran round his opponent in splendid style and put out to Durrant, who sailed away and gave Luton the lead with a lovely shot. It was a grand bit of play on the part of both Ekins and Durrant, and had the effect of putting the spectators in a thoroughly good humour.

The visitors went away very nicely from the half-way line, and Perkins had to clear, but for the most part the play up to the interval favoured Luton, who would probably have scored again but for the fact that Durrant had had to go off the field to undergo Lawsonian treatment. Ekins got in just such another centre as the two which had borne fruit, but, alas, there was no one there to receive it. Luton almost scored soon afterwards from a well-placed corner by Ford, and then came two dangerous rushes, one on the part of the visitors splendidly stopped by Williams, and the other on the part of Luton, badly stopped by the referee, who, like so many of the fraternity, was very weak on the offside rule.

Luton started the second half on pretty good terms with themselves, but it wanted just the narrow escape which their goal at once experienced to make them see how necessary it was not to ease up. Griffiths sent in an oblique shot which Perkins just, and only just, tipped round the upright. Luton cleared from the corner, and then settled down to their work in real earnest, Ekins first of all making a brilliant run and subsequently sending in a stinging shot, which rebounded off one of the backs.

A little later, Durrant, who had resumed his place immediately after the interval, centred to Kemplay, and the latter managing to beat Nidd in a fine run, scored a third goal. This was the signal for more cheering, and it was that satisfied sort of cheering which recognised that to all intents and purposes the battle had been lost and won.

Only five minutes of the second half had elapsed, but this goal took the keen edge off the interest of the spectators, who felt that the play would have to undergo a very extraordinary change indeed to alter the result. As a matter of fact, Luton continued to have the best of the game, the more so because Mountain, whose ankle had given way just before the interval, now had to leave the field altogether, Grimsby, as a consequence, having to play with only one back. Most of the visitors, too, seemed a little disheartened, and they were seldom able to make any serious attack on the Luton goal.

But though the homesters attacked time after time, and though Ekins, who was well looked after by Crump and Hewitt, travelled down the field again and again, the goals which ought to have come positively refused to do so. True, Hewitt did score a beauty from a centre by Durrant, but the referee, after pointing to the centre of the field, went and consulted one of the linesmen, and disallowed the goal for offside. Griffiths, directly afterwards, had a successful shot nullified for the same reason, but in that case there was no room for doubt.

Now and again the visitors attacked, and once or twice had really good openings, but generally speaking, they were kept on the defensive, though the Luton forwards were handicapped during the last half-hour by Durrant's manifest inability to do his bit. He had evidently hurt his shoulder badly, and could not do much more than stand still and kick the ball when it came to him. He kicked with judgment, but was not able to force matters at all.

Bagshaw had a number of shots to stop, good, bad, and indifferent, but he dealt with them in fine style, and the way in which he brought his fist down on some of them was a sight worth seeing. It was chiefly through his efforts that Luton were unable to increase their score, the record when the whistle went for time being still three to one in Luton's favour.

If I were asked to pick out the best man on the Luton side, which is equivalent, in this instance at any rate, to saying the best man on the field, I should unhesitatingly plump for Williams. As far as the amount of work accomplished was concerned, he was like two or three men rolled into one. As a back, he was as safe as a house, and then he put in a vast deal of half-back work in addition. His tackling was very near perfection. Dow, on the other hand, was not quite up to concert pitch, though, at the same time, there was not much room for fault-finding.

As to the half-backs, Ford and Crump both distinguished themselves by the excellence of their work, which, for quantity and quality, left little to be desired, but Sharp was not very successful. He too often delayed his effort until the other side had got in their kick.

Ekins played a rare good game among the forwards, making a number of very fine runs, and Hewitt, his partner, also acquitted himself very creditably indeed, giving lots of capital passes. Durrant, until he was hurt, performed with great success, McInnes as usual worked like a horse, and Kemplay played very fairly at centre.

As to the visitors, they started very smartly, but failed to keep it up. Bagshaw was their best man, perhaps, but Gray, aided by his length, gave a good account of himself at centre-half, whilst Nelmes and Nidd also rendered their side good service. The forwards were not great, Griffiths perhaps being one of the best.

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