

The League.—Division II.

LUTON TOWN v. WOOLWICH ARSENAL.

Played at Luton on Saturday. Result:—

Woolwich Arsenal	2 goals.
Luton Town	1 goal.

The teams were as follow:—

Luton—Daw, goal; Dow and McCurdy, backs; Morrison, Stewart, and Williams, half-backs; Inglis, Brook, Fairgrieve, Melrose, and Eckford, forwards.

Arsenal—Ord, goal; McNicol and Jackson, backs; Murphy, Sanders, and Dick, half-backs; Hunt, Aston, Logan, McCowie, and Tennant, forwards.

Referee, Mr. W. J. Jones, Leicester; linesman, Messrs. W. J. Wilson (London), and A. C. Knight (Bedford).

The first League match of the season on the Bury Park enclosure was played under the most favourable conditions, the weather being delightfully fine, and the crowd being large enough to put one in mind of Luton's palmiest days. There had been those who prophesied that the charge of a shilling for admission would keep hundreds away, and that hundreds of others would choose their positions outside the field from which to get a view of the game.

But bless you, when it came to the pinch, some of those who had grumbled most were earliest in attendance, and the people who stayed away on account of the extra charge could scarcely have been counted by tens, much less by hundreds. The crowd, in fact, was one of the largest seen on the ground for many a long day, and must have numbered fully four thousand persons.

This was one of the most satisfactory features of the game, for the money is just what the directors wanted to help them over the stile, and to a certain extent was of even more consideration than League points. Of course the points would have been exceedingly welcome, but have a Luton team ever been able to obtain a victory when the air was full of excitement, when thousands watched every move on the board, and when the slightest advantage on either side produced an inward groan or called forth an enthusiastic cheer, as the case might be?

We have played Millwall and Woolwich Arsenal under all sorts of conditions, we have played them with better teams than theirs, and we have played them with weaker teams, but the results have invariably been the same. When nothing but glory was depending on the issue, we could knock 'em into a cocked hat, but when League points, which are something more substantial than mere honour and glory, were at stake, then Luton have always been left lamenting.

Mr. R. S. Sievier, of Toddington Park, the gentleman who so handsomely subscribed to the funds of the Luton Club, kicked off on Saturday amid the cheers of the assembled multitude, but no sooner had the teams got to work than it could be easily seen that the Luton eleven were not going to do themselves justice, for they were so full of anxiety and so knocked off their feet by excitement, that instead of being all over the Arsenal, as they should have been, they were all over themselves, as a cool and well-regulated lot of players certainly should not have been.

In my last week's notes, I ventured to predict that the Arsenal would be very keen on winning Saturday's match, and they were. Their defeat by Leicester Fosse had done them some good. It had sobered them down, and the strenuous efforts they put forth were tempered by that cucumber-like coolness which is so essential to success in football, and which was just the one quality lacking on the part of Luton.

Of course, the visitors derived some advantage from the wind, Stewart keeping up his old reputation for losing the toss. Eckford, however, was the first to show up, but after he had centred behind, two or three fouls against Luton helped to turn the tide in the Arsenal's favour, and eventually, as the result of a free kick, Hunt got in a lovely shot from the touch-line, but Daw negotiated it in capital style.

The game was only twelve minutes' old when a disaster overtook Luton in the shape of a goal against them. It was a rank off-sider, of that there could be no doubt, but referees often fail to notice things which are patent to outsiders, and this goal was allowed to count. The ball had come across from the left, and Logan, receiving right in front, had nothing to do but pop it in the net. There was no one between him and the custodian, and the goal was in all respects similar to that which Moluner obtained in the Kettering match, and which was properly disallowed.

A few minutes later, Luton had the hardest luck in the world in not equalising. Williams placed them on the aggressive, and Eckford sending the ball across the mouth of goal, Ord ran out to intercept it and clean missed. Inglis was close up, and the slightest tap from him would have done the trick, but he failed to get on it, and the chance of a lifetime was lost.

A corner for the Arsenal was the next feature, and then Williams turning the tables once again, first Inglis had a shot, then McInnes, and this was followed by another, but in each case Ord succeeded in saving. Fairgrieve next put just by the post, and after that, Tennant, receiving from a throw-in at the other end, hit the cross-bar with a good shot, but from an offside position. Luton returned to the attack, and McNicol, who had done his best to leave an impression on one or two of the Luton players, attracted the attention of the linesman, and a foul was given. McCurdy placed beautifully, and returned again, and McNicol, in trying to clear, incurred a penalty by pushing Fairgrieve. Dow was entrusted with the kick and Ord saved, but the custodian had shifted before the whistle blew, and it had to be taken over again. This time Dow was successful, and thus, ten minutes from the interval, Luton again found themselves on level terms.

Two or three fouls against the Arsenal gave the homesters further opportunities, which were not improved upon, and then the visitors put on severe pressure. Daw had as much as he could do to get rid of a shot from McCowie, and the latter soon afterwards had another, and a better opening, but shot over the bar. This was the last thing of note before time, and the teams crossed over with honours even.

When hostilities were resumed, Luton made a vigorous attack, Stewart first of all getting in a clipping shot, which McNicol headed away. Then came four corners for Luton, one after the other, but though the Arsenal goal was several times in great danger, the threatened disaster was staved off, and the pressure was at length relieved by a foul against Stewart. Woolwich soon got in the vicinity of the Luton goal, and the Luton defence being disconcerted by an assault all along the line, Tennant whipped the ball in the net almost before anyone realised what had happened.

This, as it turned out, was the winning goal, for though there was thirty-five minutes yet to go, nothing further was scored. For a time, the visitors had rather the best of matters, but towards the finish, Luton attacked in very spirited fashion, and there were strong hopes that they would equalise. The minutes passed away, however, and though the play was full of excitement, it did not yield the longed-for goal, the consequence being that the Arsenal were left winners by the margin of two goals to one.

On the day's play, Woolwich were certainly the better team, and I should say they will not be far from the top of the table at the end of the season. Jackson, the old Newcastle man, is a very good back, but McNicol is a better, though on Saturday he ought to have been pulled up a great deal oftener than he was. Mr. Jones certainly had ideas of his own as to what constituted a foul, and whilst the whistle went promptly enough for some minor infringements, more obvious transgressions passed off apparently unobserved.

Moses Sanders, at centre half, showed that he has still got plenty of excellent football in him, and he played a clinking game. He was well supported by Dick and Murphy, the latter already being known to the Woolwich supporters by the sobriquet of "Judge," for the reason, I suppose, that he wears a wig. Among the forwards, Hunt played a good game on the right wing, but the fastest man in the quintette appeared to be Tennant, who gave Dow the slip more than once. Logan was ever on the alert at centre, and McCowie was in first-rate fettle. The team altogether combined remarkably well.

The Luton players, as I have said, did not do themselves justice. They were evidently labouring under a great deal of excitement, and their combination as a consequence left much to be desired. Daw performed well in goal; in fact, he could not have done better, but Dow was rather venturesome, and too often relied on a dash which Tennant was easily able to circumvent. McCurdy covered a good deal less ground and yet was the more reliable back of the two.

Stewart was far below his proper form at centre half, and appeared to be more worried than worrying. His head was very useful at times, but I think he, in common with the rest, divided his attention between too many players instead of concentrating it on the work which more properly fell to his share. Morrison gave a very good exhibition, but the most effective of the trio

was Williams, who was frequently the means of turning the tide of battle in favour of his side.

The forwards were very good individually, but their passing was not altogether beyond reproach, a good run more than once being spoiled by the ball being passed back instead of forward. Brock, Eckford, and Molanes were about the best of the bunch. Fairgrieve did well enough when the ball came his way, but there were times when a little more activity would have been desirable. No particular fault could be found with Inglis, except that he, too, would probably meet with greater success if he were a little more bustling in his methods.

On the whole, however, I don't think there is any reason to feel dissatisfied with Saturday's match. Unless the quality of League football has been raised all round, I think there can be no doubt that the Arsenal must prove to be one of the strongest teams in the Second Division, and yet they were only able to just snatch a victory from Luton when the latter were not at their best. Indeed, had the referee appealed to the lineamen about that first goal, it would not have been a victory at all, as both lineamen were very clear about its being offside.

The gate on Saturday realised a few shillings over two hundred pounds. This is not the largest sum ever taken on the Luton ground, but it is certainly the largest ever taken for a League match. Such a satisfactory result abundantly justifies the charge of a shilling, and goes a long way towards ensuring that four hundred pounds which the directors require to tide them over this month.

About 200 hundred applications were made for the sixpenny tickets for the Arsenal match, and half-a-dozen free ones were granted.

Two excursions were run from Woolwich on the G.N.R., picking up passengers at King's Cross, and just over 600 of the Arsenal supporters were brought down. They made enough noise for 6,000.

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By the way, what a stiff lot of matches the Luton team are having to start with. First there was Grimsby away, then the Arsenal at home, and now comes Barnsley away. The latter was regarded as one of the softest matches of the month, but I notice their eleven has undergone considerable alteration and improvement. At Leicester on Saturday they rendered such a good account of themselves that the Fossils were only able to beat them by a goal to nil. At this rate they will make Luton go all the way on Saturday. McCartney still plays for them, and is spoken of as being as good as ever.

After Barnsley comes the Leicester Fosse match at home, which is by no means a foregone conclusion, and we shall have to wait until the visit of the Burton Swifts at the end of the month, before we can count upon League points with any degree of certainty. Mind you, I do not say we shall not get one or two before, but the chances are such that it would be unwise to place them to our credit until after the event. The Swifts on Saturday managed to annex a couple of points at the expense of Loughborough, whom they beat by three goals to one. Grimsby, by way of revenge for their disappointment of the previous week, went to Burslem, and beat the Port Vale by three goals to two. The following is the League table up to date:—

	Goals.						
	Pld.	Won.	Lost.	Dra.	For.	Agst.	Pts.
Sheffield Wednesday ...	2	2	0	0	7	1	4
Leicester Fosse.....	2	2	0	0	3	0	4
Small Heath.....	2	2	0	0	6	3	4
Bolton Wanderers.....	2	2	0	0	5	3	4
Lincoln City.....	2	1	0	1	5	2	3
Grimsby Town.....	2	1	0	1	6	5	3
Barnsley.....	2	1	1	0	4	2	2
New Brighton Tower ...	2	1	1	0	3	2	2
Burslem Port Vale.....	3	1	2	0	5	6	2
Walsall.....	2	1	1	0	4	4	2
Burton Swifts.....	2	1	1	0	4	5	2
Woolwich Arsenal.....	2	1	1	0	2	3	2
Luton.....	2	0	1	1	4	5	1
Gainsborough Trinity...	2	0	1	1	2	4	1
Newton Heath.....	2	0	1	1	3	4	1
Chesterfield.....	2	0	1	1	3	7	1
Loughborough.....	2	0	2	0	3	6	0
Middlesbrough.....	3	0	3	0	2	9	0