

The League.—Division II.

LUTON TOWN v. LEICESTER FOSSILS.

Played at Luton on Saturday. Result:—

Luton Town	nil.
Leicester Fossils	nil.

The teams were as follow:—

Luton—Daw, goal; Dow and McCurdy, backs; Morrison, Stewart and Williams, half-backs; Brown, Brock, Draper, Molnes, and Eckford, forwards.

Leicester—Beardsley, goal; Wragg and Swift, backs; Ball, Dainty, and Jones, half-backs; Galbraith, Eaton, King, McMillan, and Bishop, forwards.

Referee, Mr. F. Beardsley (Plumstead).

Fortune does not always favour the brave, or Luton would have captured the two points which were at stake in Saturday's match, for despite the fact that they were burdened with a centre forward who was altogether out of the hunt, and a full back who got hurt early in the game, they more than held their own with the formidable Fossils, and the slightest bit of good fortune must have given them the victory.

It was a great undertaking to go into the field with a couple of Reserve forwards against a team which had not suffered the loss of a goal, and the experiment was only partially successful. It was a case which showed what an advantage one or two friendly matches would be, as they would give an opportunity for experiments to be made instead of their having to be resorted to on such an important occasion as a League game with Leicester Fossils.

But if fortune was not over kind to the team itself, the directors had nothing to complain of so far as gate considerations were concerned. The weather, albeit the wind was a trifle boisterous, was delightful until just before the conclusion of the game, and whilst some of the cyclists had a wet journey home, there was nothing whatever to prevent them getting to the ground. The Fossils brought about three hundred of their supporters by an excursion from Leicester, and altogether the spectators must have numbered between three and four thousand.

As a matter of course, Luton lost the toss, and the Fossils took what advantage they could from a wind which for the most part blew across the ground. To the great delight of the crowd, especially that portion which patronised the terraces, Brown was the first man to become prominent, and he put in a lovely centre, which Beardsley punted out. The Leicesterers then attacked two or three times in succession, but Galbraith at length got to the other end, where he sent behind.

Beardsley next had to save from Eckford, who had been given offside by the linesman, but not interfered with by the referee, and then a bad pass by Morrison let in Bishop, who nipped along at a rare speed, and put in a clinking shot, which Daw tipped over the bar. The corner was well placed, but Stewart headed out, and then a foolish foul by Draper gave the Fossils another chance, but the ball found its way into the net from the free kick, untouched by any other player.

Leicester, retaliating upon Luton, made a further assault upon the home goal, and Galbraith sending right across the front, it looked any odds on McMillan doing the trick, but Dow rushed across in the nick of time and averted the disaster by kicking behind. From the corner, Luton went away nicely, and from a throw-in, McInnes sent the ball into the middle, and Stewart landed it on the bar—a bit of real hard luck.

Just afterwards, McCurdy had the misfortune to get hurt, and though he stuck to his work as well as he could, the lion's share had to be left to Dow, who, however, was in brilliant form, and seemed to be capable of taking on any amount. Luton, getting on the aggressive, forced a couple of corners, the second of which was beautifully placed by Brown, but the goal-keeper and everybody else missed it.

A grand shot by Brook was the next feature, and Beardsley had all his work cut out to negotiate it, whilst Brown followed on with a middle, which Brook headed behind. Brook at this time was doing some good work, but unfortunately his cleverness became too apparent, and he took to fooling his opponents for the sake of fooling them. Draper, too, ought to have taken a shot, the opportunity for which was given him by Stewart, but he lost it, and then Williams was applauded for a splendid effort in stopping a rush by the Leicester right wing.

Luton had rather the best of matters up to the interval, and Beardsley had to save a good shot from Draper, whilst in the last minute or two, a misjudged attempt by Wragg to head the ball enabled Eckford to get quite clear, but the little left winger shot too soon and too wide. The teams, therefore, crossed over with a blank score-sheet. On the whole, Luton had had the best of the exchanges, Beardsley having had many more shots to deal with than had fallen to Daw, but a mistake was made in not playing more to Brown, who had shown excellent form, and who with the wind blowing from that side of the ground, would have had no difficulty in swinging the centres across.

When hostilities were resumed, the Fossils threatened danger two or three times, and then Luton went away and forced a corner, which was well placed by Brown, who met the return and sent behind. Dow, however, soon put the homesters on the offensive again, and a pretty piece of passing was finished up by Brook sending just wide of the upright. Then came another corner for Luton, and this was again splendidly placed by Brown. Stewart just got his head to it, but failed to accomplish his purpose, and then Brown got in a nice curling shot, to which another corner was conceded. The visitors cleared from this, and for some time the play ruled at the other end.

McCurdy stopped Bishop in capital style, but shortly afterwards the same forward got through and put in a very likely-looking shot, which ran along the bar. Daw followed it up and cleared in a manner that left nothing to be desired. The concluding stages of the game were fought out amid a scene of intense excitement. As the minutes passed away and no goal was forthcoming, notwithstanding that the game was an exceedingly fast one, the spectators became wound up to the highest pitch, and there was one continual roar of cheers and counter-cheers, the cheers, however, very largely predominating.

Indeed, I entirely fail to remember a game on the Luton ground which excited more interest than this did, especially towards the finish. Both sides struggled their very hardest to get the all-important goal, but Luton had more opportunities and looked oftener like succeeding. Draper seemed more at home in the last quarter of an hour, and from a pass from the centre, Eckford sent in a grand shot, which Beardsley only just managed to turn round the post. Leicester got away from the corner, but Dow kept them at bay, and the homesters were soon attacking again.

McInnes sent a little wide of the mark, and only a little, and then a shot from Eckford dropped on to the bar and rolled on to the net. Leicester retaliated, and Daw was thrice called upon to defend his charge. All three were teasing shots, and all three were disposed of in first-rate style. Luton responded with vigour, and Draper put the ball right across the mouth of the Leicester goal, but the others failed to reach it. Then the ball was taken up and down the field with lightning speed, until the whistle blew and put an end to a game which was splendidly contested from start to finish.

Taking the teams as they were, there may have been little to choose between them, although Luton certainly did more of the pressing than Leicester, and Beardsley had more shots to deal with than Daw. But the Fossils were very fortunate in escaping defeat, because there can be no reasonable doubt that if Luton had had a fairly effective centre-forward they would have won with a trifle to spare. The fact that Draper was so palpably out-classed is perhaps the best testimony that could be adduced to the quality of the football.

In ordinary company, Draper can hold his own pretty well, but in Saturday's game he scarcely ever had a look in, at any rate until the last quarter of an hour. Brown, however, showed up remarkably well, and fully justified his inclusion. He displayed considerable ability in heading the ball, he centred well, and he placed his corners with the nicest judgment, whilst he was never afraid to tackle or of being tackled.

Brown and McInnes were certainly the best of the forwards. Tommy is a marvel for work, and I should say on the average he gets the ball three times to any other forward's once. I am afraid a good many people do not notice this, but I'll guarantee that a little quiet observation will show that if McInnes is not the most conspicuous in taking advantage of opportunities, that is, in the shooting department, he does more to create opportunities than any other forward Luton ever had.

Eckford did some very good work, but was not quite so prominent as usual, taking the whole game through, and Brook rather spoiled his efforts, smart as they sometimes were, by indulging his cleverness to too great an extent. Of the half-backs, Williams was again the most successful, but Stewart showed a welcome improvement, though he has not yet got back to his old form. His head often came in useful, and I am longing to see him bringing it into use in the old style when corners are knocking about. Morrison played a very persevering and effective game.

But the greatest display of all was given at back. McCurdy, as I have said, got injured

early on, and though he was far from a useless member of the team even after that, the bulk of the work was left to Dow, who was easily the best man on the field. I don't want to spoil any man by over-much praise, but it is only simple justice to say that Dow had his opportunity on Saturday, and that he rose to the occasion and played magnificent football, never, so far as could be seen, making a single mistake. I question whether a better display has ever been given on the Luton ground. Daw also gave a capital exhibition between the sticks, doing everything that was asked of him in a neat and workmanlike manner.

The Posals have a pretty smart string of forwards, who wanted a lot of looking after, but perhaps their half-back line is as strong as any part of the team. Dainty, the centre-half, who I believe was playing for the first time, is the man Luton were in negotiation with during the close season, but Kettering, who held his signature, put too high a price on him. He is a good man, and his only fault on Saturday was that he was apt to kick a trifle too hard.

The backs were scarcely at their best. Swift, the captain, who is a powerful player when he is on song, seemed to lose his head or his temper or something, in the second half, and kicked out with a frequency which was as irritating as it was unnecessary. Wragg was pretty good without being brilliant, and Beardsley played finely in goal. It may be said that a little feeling was shown by one or two of the players at times, but I suppose this was a natural outcome of the deadly earnestness which was the great characteristic of the game. Mr. Beardsley missed some things, but whatever may have been his shortcomings before, he certainly afforded Luton very little cause for complaint on this occasion.

If Luton did not have the credit of scoring a goal against the Poses or of obtaining a victory, they can at least lay claim to the distinction of being the first this season to obtain a point at Leicester's expense. By the way, the goals vary in value to a considerable extent. Luton up to Saturday had scored five goals in League matches, and had only two points, whereas Leicester, with a goal less, had no less than seven points. Funny, isn't it?

I understand the gate on Saturday amounted to £86. This brings the total for the month up to £328, so that with Saturday's display still fresh in the mind, there ought to be no difficulty in raising the £77 necessary to complete the £400. Burton Swifts are not the strongest Club in the League, but they are going very well, and may be relied upon to provide a good game. In their last encounter they drew with Newton Heath, not a goal being scored on either side.