

The League.-Division II.

LUTON TOWN v. WALSALL.

Played at Luton on Saturday. Result:—

Luton Town 4 goals.

Walsall nil.

The teams were as follow:—

Luton—Daw, goal; Dow and McCurdy, backs; Morrison, Stewart, and Ralley, half-backs; Brown, Brook, Fairgrieve, Molnes, and Eckford, forwards.

Walsall—Tennant, goal; Bunch and David, backs; Holmes, Omar Jenkyns, and Lyons, half-backs; Dean, McAuley, Griffin, Martin, and Dailly, forwards.

Referee, Mr. T. J. Black (Barton); linesmen, Messrs. T. Wells and W. T. Weeks (Plumstead).

I was going to say that glorious weather favoured this fixture on Saturday, but I question whether it did favour it altogether, for it was so beautifully bright that many were tempted to spend the afternoon on the cycle. Still, there was very little to complain of in regard to the attendance, the spectators, numbering between three or four thousand—perhaps nearer the four than the three.

A good deal of disappointment was caused by the fact, discovered at the last moment, that Williams would be unable to turn out in consequence of the injury sustained at Watford on Wednesday. He was on the ground, but his arm was so badly bruised that it was deemed unsafe to put him in the field. Williams was just the man required for the occasion, men with plenty of dash and a fair amount of weight being invaluable against a team like Walsall.

It was recognised from the first that Luton would have to play up for all they were worth if they were to secure the two points. Last year, it will be remembered, the home team won the game under very sensational circumstances. Walsall were leading by two to one until the last ten minutes, when Luton clapped on a couple of goals in rapid succession, and ran out the winners by three goals to two.

Stewart, whose luck with the coin seems to have improved, won the toss, but there was no wind worth speaking of. The first thing of note was a very smart attack by Luton, as the result of a free kick taken by Dow, but Eckford sent the wrong side of the net. Walsall made a vigorous response, and Jenkyns passing to Martin, the latter sent to the front, and McCurdy clean missed. Fortunately, Daw was on the alert, and kicked out. Brown brought the ball back in very taking style, and put in a rattling good centre, but offside against Molnes nullified.

Luton came again, and Stewart landed the ball just over the bar. The visitors, who were showing any amount of energy, retaliated, and from a free kick conceded by Fairgrieve, they became very dangerous. Daw, however, brought off two beautiful saves, and pressure was at length relieved by Griffin sending over the bar. The ball was never at one end of the field many minutes together, and Luton were very soon acting on the aggressive again, but Brook, who was very erratic in his movements, nulled a good opening afforded him by Brown, sending terribly wide.

A corner for Luton was obtained by Eckford, but the same player neutralised the advantage by placing behind. The Saddlers got away, being assisted by a foul given against Stewart, and Dean had a bit of hard luck with a spanking shot, which struck the upright and rebounded to the feet of Dow, who promptly cleared. Luton were more fortunate, for at their next attempt, they succeeded in drawing blood. Eckford got in a clinking centre. Molnes shot, and after Tennant had saved, Brown, right in front, shot straight at the custodian. The latter punted out, but Brock was on the spot, and did the needful.

This was after twenty-five minutes' play, and the game up to this point had been so evenly contested that it would have taken a bold man to predict the result. The visitors, however, took to fouling, and a team never improves its position by resorting to such tactics. After Fairgrieve had tested Tennant with a dropping shot, Dow was entrusted with a couple of free kicks. Brock received right in front, with no one to stop him, but he again made a muddle of it, and finally shot high over the bar.

Still, Luton were not to be denied, and Molnes, transferring to Fairgrieve, the centre forward took a flying shot, which Tennant diverted at the expense of a corner. Brown placed, two or three shots were put in, and at last Fairgrieve scored a splendid goal. A curious thing happened on the return to the half-way line, the Saddlers being pulled up three times in kicking off, and finally having a foul given against them. This was followed by two or three more fouls by the visitors, but at length they broke away, and a miskick by McCurdy, and a further piece of misjudgment in heading the ball, looked very bad for Luton.

Weakness in goal at this juncture would have spelled disaster, but fortunately Daw was all there, and saved grandly. From a foul against Fairgrieve, Davis placed very nicely, and Lyons put in a tremendous shot, which Martin was unlucky enough to handle right in the mouth of goal. Nothing could have saved it otherwise, and as this was the last feature of note before the interval. Luton, after all, had nothing to grumble at in crossing over with a lead of two goals to nil, although on their side one or two glorious opportunities had been missed.

The second half opened with a brief visit by Walsall to the Luton end, where a miss by Dow caused alarm, but McCurdy stepped in and cleared, and a foul against the visitors gave the homesters still further assistance. Dow placed and Brock, who had been fouled before, was once more the victim of illegitimate tactics. Dow again took the kick, and this led to an extraordinary bit of business, so extraordinary, in fact, that it took the spectators some time to realise it. Davis, the left back, in trying to clear, sent very smartly towards his own goal. Bunch, evidently labouring under a misapprehension as to the whereabouts of the uprights, bobbed down and let the ball pass, and to his consternation it found a resting-place in the net, Tennant making a vain effort to save it.

But if Luton were lucky in this particular, they directly afterwards had the mortification of seeing the best goal of the day disallowed. It happened thusly. Brown put in a wonderfully tricky bit of play, and beat Lyons, who tried both fair and foul means to stop him. Roland then finishing up with a lovely shot from fully forty yards' range, and the ball going just in the corner of the goal. The spectators cheered vociferously, and great was their disappointment when they found the referee had disallowed the goal and given a foul against Lyons.

After Tennant had saved a smart shot from Eekford, the Saddlers made an attack in force, and a succession of mistakes on the part of the defenders, put the spectators on pins and needles for a minute or two, but happily danger was averted, and Luton going to the other end, Fairgrieve put in very nicely, but offside against Brock stopped what would otherwise have been a certain goal.

The next incident was a bad foul against Casper Jenkins, who treated Brock in a very shabby way, and from the free kick, Fairgrieve headed in, and Tennant saved. The Saddlers now went at it in ding-dong style, and the game was as fast and exciting as the most exacting on-looker could have wished for, the only thing to detract from the interest of the proceedings being the roughness of the visitors' methods. The Walsall goal having experienced several very narrow escapes, the play was transferred to the other end, and Griffin, with an open goal, ought to have scored easily, but he steered the ball just by the post.

Luton took prompt advantage of the let-off. Brown doing a smart piece of travelling and putting in a grand centre. Tennant ran out and missed the ball, and Melrose had no difficulty in registering the fourth point. Walsall, goaded by his fresh reserves, made the most desperate efforts to "get their own back," or to do something towards it, but thanks in a great measure to the grand play of Daw in goal, they were unsuccessful in their endeavours. Two or three corners fell to them, and from one of these Hally placed the ball in the net untouched, but that was the nearest they got to a goal.

Taking the game all through, it was a very fine one, with, as I have said, only the fouling propensities of the visitors to mar the play. From start to finish, they played away with remarkable determination, and it is surprising that the deadly earnestness they displayed should have gone altogether unrecruited. But I think they suffered more than anything from their own misdeeds, their foul-speaking very prejudicially to themselves. Of smartness they had any amount, stamina little, and of ability a good share, but they were mad, very mad, when they found the game going against them, and there was not so much method in their madness as there would have been under less exciting conditions.

Of Luton, I can only say they played a jolly, good all-round game, there being but two comparatively weak spots in the team. McCurdy at back made several mistakes, and was not by any means as strong as he has been on some other occasions, whilst Brock was not the Brock we all wish to see, and was not the Brock he can be when he is in form. I am anxious to see a little more dash, a little more straightforward play, and a little less fancy-work—in fact, I want to see him what he was at the end of last season.

The other four forwards were in their very best trim, and it would be a mere matter of taste to say which was the best of the four. The fact of it was they were all best, and if I were to say McInnes and Pehford, and someone else were to plump for Brown and Fairgrieve, I should be right and they would be right as well. In specially mentioning Fairgrieve, it is because previously I have not been able to say too much in his favour. On Saturday, he played smart and dashing football, and he passed out to the wings much more freely than before. If he were to maintain this form, we might be content to bide a wee before taking on the heavy man.

Stewart played a great game at centre half, and was a host in himself. He was all over Griffin, who seldom got a chance of doing anything, and at last he quite gave up trying to head the ball when Stewart was about. Morrison and Ralley both performed in capital style, and Dow, until just the last, when he seemed to tire a little, was as sound as a rock at back, and a great deal more lively. Daw, though not busily employed, had some very difficult work, and he did it splendidly.

Whilst Luton were achieving such a glorious victory over Walsall, the Arsenal were just scraping home against Gainsborough Trinity, who had not won a match, and who were consequently expected to be easy victims. The Trinitarians were actually leading by a goal to nil at half-time, but the Arsenal afterwards equalised from a penalty, and subsequently obtained the winning goal. Luton's victory gave them quite a respectable position in the League, as will be seen from the following table:—

	Goals.						
	Pld.	Won.	Lost.	Draw.	For.	Agst.	Pts.
Small Heath	8	7	0	1	25	8	14
Leicester Fosse	7	6	0	1	12	2	13
Sheffield Wednesday ...	7	6	0	1	18	4	13
Bolton Wanderers	6	5	1	2	10	5	8
Grimsby Town	6	5	1	2	13	10	8
Westwich Arsenal	7	4	3	0	9	9	8
Burton Port Vale	6	4	4	0	11	11	8
Lincoln City	8	3	4	1	11	17	7
Luton Town	7	3	3	2	14	10	8
Newton Heath	7	2	3	2	9	7	6
Derby	6	2	3	1	9	11	5
Walsall	7	2	4	1	11	16	5
Middlesbrough	8	2	5	1	6	17	5
New Brighton Tower ...	5	1	1	1	4	3	3
Chesterfield	4	1	2	1	9	13	3
Burton Swifts	7	1	5	1	7	18	3
Gainsborough Trinity...	6	0	5	1	7	15	1
Loughborough	6	0	5	1	6	16	1