

The League.-Division II.

LUTON TOWN v. NEWTON HEATH.

Played at Luton on Saturday. Result:—

Newton Heath	1 goal.
Luton Town	nil.

The teams were as follow:—

Luton: Daw, goal; Dow and Hawkes, backs; Morrison, Snewers, and Ralley, halves; Durrant, Brock, Fairgrieve, Molnes, and Beckford, forwards.

Newton Heath: Barrett, goal; Stafford and Breck, backs; Morgan, Gennins, and Carwright, halves; Bryant, Clark, Parkinson, Jackson, and Cassidy, forwards.

Referee, Capt. Simpson (London); linesmen, Messrs. A. W. Cooknell and J. Threlson (Loughborough).

A disappointing game, a disappointing game, and a disappointing result—that, in brief, is the story of Saturday's match. Locally, the event had not been looked forward to with any confident expectation of winning, for there is no use disguising the fact that inability to score against anything like a strong defence has recently become rather a pronounced feature with the Luton team.

Why this should be so, it is difficult to say, and the only explanation that occurs to me is that the forwards as a whole are too little and too clever. The drawback as to size might be overcome, but the cleverness seems to be a much more serious matter. If it were only a matter of exhibition and not one of getting goals, I believe the Luton team would hold their own against almost all comers, but the painful lack of directness of methods militates strongly against bringing the efforts to the culminating point.

This does not apply to all the forwards, but it does to at least two, and it was very apparent on Saturday. But for this, I believe that a different result might have been arrived at despite the fact that McCurdy had to be substituted by Hawkes, and that for the greater part of the second half Luton were playing with only ten men.

The game started at half-past two, and the Heathens went about as straight as they could from the half-way line to the Luton goal, at which Clark got in a clinking shot, but Dow kicked out in splendid style. Luton retaliated, chiefly through Brock, but Ralley sent wide. Brock and Durrant next got away in very nice style, and Durrant swinging the ball to the centre, parallel with the goal line, Fairgrieve received, but was hampered and failed to get in his shot.

From a throw-in, Luton, who were now going well, forced a corner, and in trying to turn it to account they had to endure a lot of rough usage. Presently Durrant got in a beautiful centre, which went begging, and the visitors transferred the play to the other end, where Stewart headed out a shot, and Luton got away again from a free kick. Brock, receiving from Stewart, had a fine opening, but shot terribly wide.

Beckford next sent over the bar, and after Hawkes had placed a free kick a little wide of the mark, the Heathens acted on the aggressive, and were conceded a corner. This was well placed by Bryant, Fairgrieve headed away, but Morgan returned to the mouth of goal, and Jackson headed into the net, the visitors thus obtaining the lead about twenty minutes from the start.

For a time Luton showed a determination to equalise, and Barrett had a good handful from a header by Beckford. The homesters then forced a corner, and Beckford placed very nicely, but Ralley tried a fancy kick which did not come off and the Heathens went straight for Daw, but Bryant neutralised a fairly good opportunity by shooting wide.

A foul by Morrison did not improve matters, and from this time up to the interval, the visitors generally had the best of matters. Like nearly all other teams that come to Luton, they beat the homesters easily in regard to dash, and often got the ball when equal smartness on the home side would have effectually prevented them.

Taken altogether, the lead which the Heathens had obtained fairly represented the play, and no one could truthfully say that they had not been worth a goal more than Luton. In the second half, however, they did not show to so much advantage. Luton were given a corner early on, and though this did not benefit them much, Stewart initiated another assault, Morrison landed the ball in the centre, and Fairgrieve hit the bar with a hot shot.

Just prior to this, Griffith had received some damage to his nose, and Capt. Simpson stopped the play for a time while Dr. McArthur was attending to it. A much worse misfortune soon afterwards befel Luton, however, Dow, who has been playing in great form, getting his shoulder hurt in taking the ball from Cassidy, Jackson, and Parkinson, and he had to retire for the rest of the game.

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This seemed to be the forerunner of a lot more goals for Newton Heath, but it was surprising how Luton buckled to, and did their best to make amends for Dow's absence. Stewart went back Morrison centre-half, and Brock right-half, Luton thus contenting themselves with four forwards. Notwithstanding this, they not only held their own, but really had the better of the play, and the Heathens were driven to the experiment of kicking out and wasting time.

The Heathens attacked first of all, and from a shot that hit the post, a corner resulted, but Luton raced to the other end, and Durrant put in a good shot which Barrett fumbled before managing to clear. A mix-up on the part of the defenders next gave Fairgrieve a splendid opportunity, but he shot tamely, and Barrett easily negotiated.

Some amusement was caused by a very deliberate handling of the ball by Brock, right in front of the referee, and the amusement found vent in a very hearty laugh when it was discovered that Captain Simpson had not seen it. From a throw-in, Durrant sent in a lovely shot, which Barrett saved just under the bar, whilst a little later Eckford struck the inside of the bar, but even then the Heathens had the luck to clear.

Several corners fell to Luton in the last few minutes of the game, but try as they would, they could not get the equalising goal, and when the whistle blew, the visitors were left in possession of a somewhat lucky victory by a goal to nil. One would be inclined to give them the credit for being the better team, but still, on the play, they were fortunate to win.

Looked at in some ways, Luton did well to lose by only a goal, but with every desire to give them all the credit that is possible, one can but say that they might have done a great deal better. That there will have to be a radical alteration in the methods of the front string goes without saying. Eckford and McInnes are far and away the most effective workers, but neither of them are as dangerous in the shooting department as one would like to see.

McInnes' passing is as near perfection as it well could be, and if the others would only act on the same principle there would be a different tale to tell. When Tommy dribbles, as he often does, he seldom dribbles long enough to allow his opponents to get on to him, whereas Brock, who has pretty well as much command of the ball, just as seldom gets rid of it soon enough to prevent being robbed.

I am very sorry about Brock. A fine young player, with every promise of getting into the first class, he is absolutely ruining his reputation and throwing his chances away by hanging to the ball when hanging to it can only mean wasted effort, or something worse. Fairgrieve does not sin in the same direction, or perhaps I should say to the same degree, but he shares with Brock the fault of always or nearly always taking the ball to the centre when it might with much better advantage be passed to the outside men.

The ideal line of forwards is one in which the men are constantly keeping the ball on the move, when the inside men pass freely and to those of their comrades who are clear of their opponents, and when the outside men make a practice of swinging the ball across the goal rather than into the goalkeeper's hands. These, unfortunately, are among the points where there is most room for improvement with the Luton forwards.

Dealing with Saturday's game, Eckford and McInnes acquitted themselves very creditably. Fairgrieve and Brock were comparative failures, for the reasons just stated, and Durrant was certainly not a better man than Brown on the outside.

Of the half-backs, sometimes Stewart and sometimes Morrison showed up most prominently, though taking the game all through, including his excellent display at back, I should say Stewart rendered the sounder service. Dow, as already stated, played a great game until he was hurt, and Hawkes, whilst making some mistakes and a few miskicks, did quite as well as could have been expected.

With regard to the visitors, they were strong and weak by fits and starts. In the first half, they gave a very good show, but when it came to playing against ten men, they frequently resorted to kicking out and other methods of wasting time, which, under the circumstances, was not particularly creditable. Barrett did all that was required of him in goal in very capable fashion, and Stafford played a good game at back. The halves were a strong trio, and Brvant was the bright and shining light among the forwards. Parkinson played in quite his old style, and was a trifle rough into the bargain.