

FOOTBALL.

LUTON DRAW AT LEICESTER.

A FINE PERFORMANCE.

History repeated itself once more on Saturday, on the occasion of the Luton team's journey to Leicester to meet the Fosse in a League contest, the result, as in the two previous years Luton has been in the competition, being a draw. These two sides seem not to be able to get over each other, for when they met at Luton in the first month of the season the game ended in a pointless draw. This time four goals were equally divided between the teams, although the visitors claim that they themselves should have been awarded three, if not four, goals. The only alteration made in the Bedfordshire team from that which defeated Barnsley on the previous Saturday was that Holdstock was substituted for Brown in the half-back line, Williams taking the left position. Leicester were not quite at full strength, Dainty and Galbraith being absent. The game was played before about 6,000 spectators, and the ground was in a very heavy condition. Mr. F. Beardsley was the referee, and the sides under his charge were as follows:—

Luton: Daw; Dow and McCurdy; Barnes, Holdstock and Williams; Brock, and McInnes, Draper, Eckford and Dimmock.

Leicester: Beardsley; Wragg and Swift; Ball, Robinson and Jones; Bradshaw and Brown, McMillan, King and Allen.

The Fosse captain won the toss and decided to have in the first half what advantage there was to be had from the wind. The home forwards made the first run and the outside left centred, but McCurdy relieved. Then each side attacked in turn, neither being able to break through its opponents' defence. The heavy going was all against accuracy in passing or in shooting, but under the adverse conditions both sides played surprisingly well, though it is not to be wondered at that in each case defence was generally superior to attack. McCurdy was again prominent in stemming the onrush of the Fosse forwards, but a little later a corner was forced by Bradshaw and from the corner kick Allen succeeded in tipping the ball past Daw. Thus the first goal of the match was credited to the home side, who had worked very hard to obtain the point. But they were destined not to hold the lead very long, for in a minute or two Draper, with characteristic dash, took advantage of a slip by Wragg, pouncing on the ball and beating Beardsley at close quarters. The game was now keener fought than ever and some very interesting play was seen; indeed, it was a good deal more so than many Leicester people had expected or even wished for, the anticipated runaway victory for the "Fossils" not coming off. Each goal was hotly assaulted, and a chance of scoring which was presented to McInnes was not turned to advantage. However, it was all that Leicester could do to cross over with the lead, it being just on half-time that McMillan, after a good individual exhibition, beat the Luton custodian and so placed the home side ahead. Thus when the interval arrived the position of affairs was as follows:—

LEICESTER, 2; LUTON, 1.

Right from the re-start Luton attacked and Beardsley was called upon to save. He did so, but could not effect a good clearance and Draper was enabled to make the scores level once more. This made the Fosse men desperate and they played for all they were worth, keeping the ball mainly in the Luton half for a considerable time. In their anxiety to score — for they have hopes of reaching the First Division — the Leicester men even played six forwards. This availed them nothing, however, for the Lutonians offered such dogged resistance that every effort of the homesters was frustrated. The halves and backs on the visiting side worried the opposing forwards too much to allow them to shoot often, and when they did Daw was always ready to negotiate the shots. At length Luton had a look in at the other end and Brock shot through the posts, the referee, however, after consultation with the linesmen, disallowing the point for off-side. — Thereafter each side attacked in turn and Luton a fourth time netted the ball, only to have the point disallowed, and strive as they would neither side could get the lead. Thus a hard-fought and very interesting contest ended with these totals:—

LUTON, 2 ; LEICESTER, 2.

The *Leicester Daily Post* thus describes the last 20 minutes' play:—"There is no question about it being Luton's day out. Fosse made a determined effort to break the ice; Bradshaw shot with great force, Holdstock got it away, Fosse returned, and the Luton goal was lucky somewhat in escaping. McCurdy missed his kick, letting in Bradshaw, who overran the ball, and was successfully challenged by Dow. Luton now assumed the offensive, and Brock put through, but the referee, after consulting one linesman, disallowed the point as offside. Luton were now playing up brilliantly, and it was evident that in the remaining quarter of an hour Fosse would have to make no mistakes, or else the first defeat on their own ground for a couple of seasons might be their portion. Wragg went amongst the home forwards, so that with Luton forwards going so strong the home defence were running something of a risk, though possibly the prospect of an additional goal might be regarded as justifying the course under the circumstances. The last ten minutes were desperately waged. Fosse were again attacking, and losing not a second in their endeavour to take the lead. A good ground shot by Bradshaw resulted in a corner, which came to nothing. Fosse were pressing severely, and from a pass by McMillan Wragg put over the bar. The Luton backs were rich in pluck, and at last much-needed relief came, but it was only temporary, and after good work by King, Fosse gained a corner, placed by Allen, but Barnes cleared. There was five minutes yet to run, but it seemed as if the Luton backs were not going to give in. Dow kicked the ball clean out of the field, and, needless to say, the ball was returned with remarkable rapidity. From Wragg's pass, Bradshaw shot in hard and true, but Daw saved magnificently. Two minutes now remained, and Fosse were straining every nerve, yet seemed to be leading a forlorn hope. The ball got into midfield and stuck there for a few seconds, and Luton now seemed pretty certain of their draw. Swift, who was forcing the game from full back, got in a huge kick; McCurdy volleyed back, as if the ball had been struck by a huge pendulum, and then a very anxious moment for Fosse followed. Dimmock beat Swift and centered to Eckford, and the latter had only Beardsley to beat. The Fosse goalkeeper, without a moment's hesitation, ran out of goal, pounced on the leather, and took it clean from Eckford's foot, before the Luton man had fairly made up his mind what to do. The last ten minutes had seemed more like a whole half. Fosse got the ball back to midfield, when the whistle blew."

FOOTBALL FACTS AND FANCIES.

The performance of the Luton team at Leicester on Saturday was a surprise to most of us and must have come as a stunning blow to the partisans of the Fosse. Fancy the team almost at the bottom of the League going into the Midlands and taking a much-needed point from the "Fossils," who have been counting recently upon getting near the top of the tree! It was very cheeky.

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When it was suggested to me on Saturday forenoon that the Lutonians had a fairly good chance I laughed—in derision. When the welcome news arrived at night that the men had forced a draw I laughed again—this time with pleasure. It is probable that this pretty accurately indicates the feelings also of many a Luton supporter, for lately our enthusiasm is down at zero.

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We had all along put down the Leicester visit as a walk-over for the Fosse. Surely after the excellent performance of the locals we are entitled to take heart of grace. The Luton team has come off extremely well, indeed, against the Leicester men. They have now played two draws this season—home and away—a feat that few but the top-sawyers can boast of.

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On September 23 the "Fossils" journeyed to Luton and a goal-less game was the outcome. On Saturday each side scored twice, and in this connection it is worthy of note that no other team has succeeded in obtaining two goals at Leicester. I am afraid the "Fossils" have fallen on a bad time, for in the previous week they were beaten by a much inferior side.

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Surely a team that can score three League points in a fortnight ought not to be allowed to break up. These performances have done much to reawaken interest in the club, and it will be surprising if the public does not rally to the support of the directors.

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It is curious that the three meetings of Luton and the Fosse at Leicester should have resulted in as many draws. It is, furthermore, a pity that the wearers of the Luton uniform cannot manage to do better elsewhere than at Leicester.

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I notice that one critic says: "Luton played a determined game, and probably performed above their usual ability; otherwise their present position in the chart is a mystery." Perhaps this comment by another writer may be accepted as the explanation: "Luton's local team also played wonderfully well, and like the Arsenal, seem to be doing much better without their stars."

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That is just the point. It was the so-called "stars" that were responsible for bringing the club into the lowly position it occupied a fortnight ago. Since the return of Harry Williams and the disappearance of half-a-dozen of the "pros," the team has done infinitely better. It seemed that the highly paid players could not or would not perform well, whereas the present team both can and does.

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Without wishing to cast a slur upon the honourable professionals, one cannot escape the reflection that it is remarkable—to say the least—that a team costing half what it formerly did should be playing so much better. It seems as though the directors have succeeded in cutting away the source of the disease that was killing the club.

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Do not let it be supposed that I am of opinion that the team as newly constituted is to sweep the deck. There are bound to be reverses but there are some matches which should provide victories for the home arms. Anyhow, those who take an interest in the game should rally to the support of the club.

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The critic I have already quoted says: "The result should do Luton much good, as it was a fine performance, their defence being particularly good." That is just the point. The strongest members of the team in point of ability have been retained and the duffers have departed, so that with capable youngsters introduced instead the result is a strengthening of the side.

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Here is a complimentary allusion to some of the locals: "Dow, the old Newton Heath back, was the most prominent in the Luton defence, playing a brilliant game; and forward, the work of Molnes and Draper always caught the eye."

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The Lutonians are strong in their expressions concerning Mr. Beardley's decision when he disallowed goal of theirs in the second half on the score of off-side. The referee was not altogether clear on the point apparently, for he consulted his linesman before giving a final decision. It was hard luck for Luton to lose the point.

the point.

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"Fossil," writing in the *Morning Leader*, observes: "Luton are to be congratulated for the sturdy manner with which they stuck to their work. Though their play was not what one would term scientific it was always robust and hard. They could not be trifled with in any way. Every man was a tryer, and played as though the issue depended on the success of his getting the better of his opponent. Both in attack and defense the team unquestionably did well, and provided they play together to the end of the season they should be able to bar the progress of other clubs beside the Fosse."

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"Rover" on Monday remarked: "As long as they maintain their form of Saturday last there should be no need for either the Arsenal or Luton to put up the shutters yet awhile. I regard the performance of the Strawplaiters, with the nondescript team they have at their disposal, against Leicester Fosse, as one of the best things of the day. Luton are playing several local men, and long may they wave. It is a curious fact that both the Arsenal and Luton snapped up a League point at Leicester, and I am much afraid that the latest piece of work in that direction will rather spoil the chances of the Fosse for the First Division."

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The *Sportsman*, in the course of a comment on the non-success of Leicester, says that Luton "seem to have taken a turn for the better just when their position was at its worst."

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Saturday's Second League results were:—
a Woolwich Arsenal..... 3 v. Walsall 1
a Leicester Fosse 2 v. Luton Town 2
a Lincoln City 1 v. Bolton Wanderers 0
a Sheffield Wednesday... 5 v. Loughborough ... 0
a Grimsby Town 2 v. Middlesbrough ... 0
a Newton Heath 4 v. Burton Swifts..... 0
a Chesterfield 5 v. New Brighton ... 2
a Barnsley 8 v. Burslem Port Vale 0
a Small Heath 8 v. Gainsborough ... 1
a Home clubs.

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The Second League table on Monday stood thus:—
Goals.
Plyd. Won Lost Drn. Pts. For Agst.
Bolton Wand'rs. 21 .. 13 .. 2 .. 6 .. 32 .. 52 .. 19
Sheffield W..... 19 .. 14 .. 2 .. 3 .. 31 .. 48 .. 12
Leicester Fosse .. 20 .. 11 .. 2 .. 7 .. 29 .. 32 .. 14
Small Heath 19 .. 12 .. 4 .. 3 .. 27 .. 48 .. 23
Newton Heath .. 19 .. 11 .. 5 .. 3 .. 25 .. 25 .. 13
Lincoln City 21 .. 9 .. 7 .. 5 .. 23 .. 34 .. 31
Burslem Port Vale 20 .. 9 .. 7 .. 4 .. 22 .. 27 .. 27
Grimsby Town .. 19 .. 3 .. 6 .. 5 .. 21 .. 38 .. 35
Chesterfield..... 18 .. 8 .. 6 .. 4 .. 20 .. 37 .. 40
Walsall 21 .. 7 .. 9 .. 5 .. 19 .. 33 .. 37
Woolwich Arsenal 12 .. 3 .. 7 .. 3 .. 19 .. 23 .. 28
N. Brighton Tower 19 .. 4 .. 8 .. 7 .. 15 .. 31 .. 33
Middlesbrough .. 20 .. 5 .. 10 .. 5 .. 13 .. 29 .. 36
Gainsboro' Trinity 19 .. 4 .. 11 .. 4 .. 12 .. 27 .. 45
Burton Swifts.... 19 .. 4 .. 12 .. 3 .. 11 .. 24 .. 47
Luton Town 19 .. 3 .. 11 .. 5 .. 11 .. 23 .. 40
Barnsley 19 .. 3 .. 12 .. 4 .. 10 .. 18 .. 49
Loughborough .. 13 .. 1 .. 13 .. 4 .. 6 .. 11 .. 47

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The only fixture in the Second League to-morrow (Saturday) is that at Chesterfield between Middlesbrough and Chesterfield, which, if form counts for anything, should produce another victory for the home team.

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Luton's record: Played, 33; won, 9; lost, 15; drawn, 9; goals for 68, against 80.

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The *Athletic Field* on Monday contained the following notes:—"Hats off to Luton's lads! To draw with Leicester Fosse on the sacred soil of Leicester was a really great achievement for a team whose very officials have felt constrained to apologise for their existence. Let us have no more of that, but rather let Lutonians upbraid themselves for their lack of appreciation for the sterling stuff that has too long been neglected because within their gates. We do not seek to avoid the fact that their successes against Barnsley and Leicester Fosse have been more the result of pluck, determination, and high resolve than actual football ability, for it is on that account we esteem it most."

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"Mere football ability is common enough to-day. We can look around and see teams which, on ability, might achieve any ambition, but which on play are expensive failures. What these want is the purging of a few highly paid lethargies and an injection of some Luton lotion such as has enabled a lot of raw, wall-plucked buds to draw with the flower of the Second League and do what their more highly paid predecessors had never given a hope of being able to accomplish. We are beginning to think that the decision to give half a dozen free transfers to their best-paid men was the wisest step the Luton directors have ever taken."

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"If the footballers of the Bedford town have any of the saving grace of sportsmanship left in them they will not let this high courage go without its reward. The directors have pluckily decided to continue the struggle to the end of the present chapter, and we shall blush for Luton if it does not, under the circumstances and out of the charity of a sporting soul, see that the resolution is properly appreciated. Luton should be proud of its scratch team."

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Concerning the ties in the first round of the competition proper for the English Cup—in which the Luton club is a mere spectator in consequence of its defeat by the Queen's Park Rangers—there is a good deal of interest, inasmuch as there are this season seven Southern clubs engaged.

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Four of the matches are to be decided in the South—at Kensal Rise (Queen's Park Rangers), Bristol, Southampton, and Portsmouth—three of the four visiting teams being First League sides. Southampton against Everton and Portsmouth against Blackburn Rovers are thought to have fairly good chances. They may have; but I do not fancy them much.

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Queen's Park Rangers will do splendidly if they manage to beat the Wolverhampton Wanderers, while Bristol should manage to defeat Stalybridge Rovers. Tottenham Hotspur, Reading and Millwall are to visit Preston, Newcastle and Jarrow respectively. I fancy the chances of Millwall most.

A note in the *Athletic Field* says: "They are trying to run a Second Division club at Barnsley on gates of from £20 to £30, and with the usual result." This is not very encouraging for the Luton directors.

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The *Nottingham Guardian* on Monday said:—"Visiting clubs in the Second Division of the League had a particularly unhappy time. The only one to gain a point was Luton, and they had good reasons to crow at dividing the honours with Leicester Fosse at Leicester. Two goals were scored on either side, and when Luton's are left out of the question it will be found that the visiting teams scored four between them."

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The *Leicester Daily Post* had the following jottings:—"A clear decisive win by Fosse over Luton would have helped to take away the nasty taste in the mouth left by the memory of that disaster at Burton seven days previously, but the actual result was not potent enough medicine for this. Although in the preceding two League games at Leicester Luton had drawn, yet it was confidently hoped that Fosse would make this, the third time, pay for all, and that two welcome points would find their way into the local pannier. However, 2-2 was the verdict, and we must take the disappointment as philosophically as we can, for no amount of chafing and worry will alter the result."

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It was known what rough times Luton had of late been having. But the fact remains that the Bedfordshire men played a fine fighting game, and their form utterly belied their lowly position in the League. On a dry ground a different result might have ensued, but the heavy, sticky going seemed to suit Luton to a nicety, and their backs, with the exception of making one or two miskicks, of which advantage was not taken, did wonderfully well."

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"Strictly speaking, Fosse had more of the game than had Luton, but the latter were so dangerous at times as to incline one to say that the result was a very fair reflex of what took place. The usual 'near thing' was experienced by both sides, but perhaps the ripest opportunity was missed by a Luton forward (McInnes) when Beardsley was for the moment unable to shift the ball out of a greasy spot. There was only one way to win a match under Saturday's conditions, and that was for the forwards to shoot for all they were worth."

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"In goalkeeping both sides were getting good service; the back play was even; at half Fosse had the advantage owing to smart work by Jones and Ball, but the Luton forwards were, on the play, quite on a par with the home lot. One cannot withhold admiration for the pluck and go of a team which, after being led on two distinct occasions, yet each time managed to get on level terms. Fosse started well, but the Luton defenders—especially Dow—were real workers. For a period the Luton forwards fell off, though once they equalised they showed up better than ever."

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"The last quarter of an hour was a great struggle. On the one side you had Fosse working like Trojans to get that precious goal which would win them the match; on the other side, Luton seemed to be saying just as determinedly, 'No, you shan't.' Fosse were crowding on all sail, and Wragg—the now recognised man to go up amongst the forwards in times of trouble—was sent to the front, leaving one back in Swift. But all was in vain, as far as Fosse were concerned."

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"Beardsley, in goal, had no chance with the first goal scored against him; in regard to the second, he had cleared very neatly only a moment before, and it was from the rebound that the point resulted. This was thus more or less an accidental affair, but credit was due to Draper for following up as he did. Only once during the whole match was Beardsley slow in getting the ball away, and then Fosse were somewhat lucky in being able to clear in time, though Robinson showed commendable dash in doing so."

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"Daw, in the Luton goal, was smart, especially in the last quarter. Dow played a great game at full-back, and McCurdy was a most useful partner; the halves were three robust men, Williams on the left being the pick; and forward the work of McInnes (right inside) and Draper (centre) continually caught the eye. Luton have now made a draw in all their three League games at Leicester."

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The Luton team is due at Chatham to-morrow (Saturday) in a "friendly." The guarantee, I am given to understand, is £20 and half the proceeds over £40.