

The League.-Division II.

LEICESTER FOSSE v. LUTON TOWN.

Played at Leicester on Saturday. Result:—

Leicester Fosse	2 goals.
Luton Town	2 goals.

The teams were as follow:—

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

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

Referee, Mr. F. W. Beardsley.

Not the most optimistic of the few enthusiasts who have clung to Luton during good and evil report could have dreamt that anything but disaster would attend the visit to Leicester on Saturday. That the Fossils, third on the League list, and still in the running for premier honours, should be bearded in their own den, and should be severely put to it to even make a draw with the poor broken-down remnants of the Luton team, appeared to be entirely outside the range of possibility.

But the Luton men went with a determination to give a good account of themselves, they put that determination into their play, and the result was as gratifying to themselves as it was surprising to everybody else. The Fossils, although not quite at full strength, made no manner of doubt of their ability to win. They had not been beaten in a League match on their own ground for a couple of seasons, and it was not likely that where the top-sawyers had failed, Luton, in their moribund condition, would succeed.

About six thousand people assembled to witness the encounter, and an unexpectedly interesting programme was provided for them. Early on, the Lutonians gave evidence of their intention to go for all they were worth, they showed plenty of spirit at various other periods of the game, and towards the finish they went at it in such a ding-dong style that the match was brought to a conclusion amid a perfect blaze of excitement.

Owing to the recent rain, the ground was in a very heavy state, and sand had been liberally distributed over the softer portions. The Fosse won the toss, but Luton were the first to get within shooting range, and several shots were put in at the Leicester goal. For the most part they were wide of the mark, and this was likewise the case with the Leicester attempts when at last they were made.

The home forwards then got rather more pressing in their attentions, but clever work by Dow and McCurdy frustrated their efforts. Luton retaliated with considerable vigour, but found the Fosse defence very sound, and at length, after twenty minutes' play a smart movement on the Leicester right ended in Bradshaw forcing a corner, from which Allen succeeded in putting on the first goal for Leicester.

The Fossils were not destined to maintain their advantage for very long, however, not more than two minutes having elapsed when Draper, profiting by a little weakness on the part of Wragg, made an easy opening, from which he had no difficulty in scoring the equalising goal. It was only by a bit of very hard luck that Luton did not gain the lead a moment later. Dimmock got in a nice centre, and Beardsley ran out to clear, but owing to the shockingly bad state of the ground, he failed in the attempt. This seemingly left McInnes with the goal at his mercy, but Tommy could not shift the ball, and Robinson bounding in, saved at the expense of a corner, which was unproductive.

It was unfortunate, for the Fosse, taking heart from their left-off, put in some excellent work, and the result of a nice piece of combination was that McMillan put on Leicester's second goal with a clever shot. The homesters after this had rather the better of the play, but nothing further was scored before the interval, the Fosse then leading by two goals to one.

Luton started the second half in very promising form, attacking the home goal in most impetuous fashion. Beardsley saved from a centre from Brook, but failed in his endeavour to get rid of the ball, which rebounded off Draper, who was following up, and went through the goal. This success naturally put the Lutonians on good terms with themselves, and some very spirited play on both sides was the result.

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The Fosse made the most strenuous efforts to again get the lead, and Luton were equally strenuous in resisting their assaults. Dow at this time was playing in fine form, as indeed was McCurdy also, and the half-backs were stubbornly contesting every inch of ground. Several times the Fosse came near doing the trick. From a centre by Allen, Brown almost managed to get through, and there was a very anxious time soon afterwards, when Dow missed his kick in front of goal, but before a Leicester forward could get on the ball, Daw rushed out and cleared.

Twice Holdstock neutralised efforts by Bradshaw, once heading away from a centre and then getting in the way of a terrific shot. A little later, McCurdy missing his kick, again let in Bradshaw, but Dow came to the rescue, and the danger was averted. For some time Luton had been acting almost entirely on the defensive, but they now rallied in brilliant style, and Brock actually succeeded in beating the Leicester custodian, but the referee, after consulting one of the linesmen, disallowed the point as offside.

Still, Luton continued to go very strong, and during the last ten or fifteen minutes the battle was fought with great vigour, and the excitement among the spectators was intense. It was, however, not so much a question among them as to whether Leicester would win, but rather as to whether they would escape defeat, for there was no mistaking the deadly earnestness with which the Lutonians went about their business.

The Fosse gained a couple of corners, and Daw saved a hard shot from Bradshaw in grand style. Then the ball was taken to mid-field, Swift sent it back with a huge kick, and McCurdy promptly returned. This led to a moment of breathless interest, Dimmock beating Swift and putting in a middle to Eckford, who had only Beardsley to deal with. The Fosse custodian, however, ran out of goal, pounced on the leather, and took it from Eckford's foot before the Luton man had made up his mind what to do.

The goalkeeper's prompt action saved the game for Leicester, it being practically the last incident of the match. The last few minutes had been full of incident, and there was enough excitement crowded into that time to have sufficed for the whole game. All through, it had been a stiff tussle, but the concluding stages were worthy of the best traditions of the clubs engaged.

But whilst the draw was not very satisfactory from a Leicester point of view, it was a performance upon which the Luton team deserve to be highly congratulated. It is singular, however, how very close the matches between these Clubs have generally been. Five times they had played, and on four occasions there had never been more than a goal in it. First it was a draw at one goal each, then the Fosse won by a goal to nil, and this was followed by another draw at one goal all. In January of last year, Leicester seemed to break the spell by scoring six goals against Luton's one, but in September last they had to be content with a point less draw at Luton, and now we have finished up with another draw—by far the most creditable of the lot as far as Luton are concerned.

The "Leicester Daily Mercury" on Saturday evening, in sympathising with the Fosse, "because they failed to win when local ambition invited—demanded—a victory," said: "It should be borne in mind that Luton played a more than ordinarily plucky game, that their defence, barring a couple or so of bad miskicks, were untiring workers, and that some smart movements were executed by their forwards. To the man in the street, Luton are not a good team; they are painfully inconsistent, and the executive know what a financial battle is; but, all the same, Luton this afternoon played a hard, bull-dog game, and showed form infinitely above their reputation. . . The result of the game did Luton vast credit, and after such a fine performance they ought to be assured of more support at home, for by all accounts they need it." In speaking of the merits of the players, the same journal says: "Of the visitors, Dow played a magnificent back game; their goalkeeper was smart; the halves were all plodders; and McInnes and Draper were the best of the forwards."

The "Mercury," in its comments on Monday, said: "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 two welcome points would find their way into the local pennant. 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. 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. Strictly speaking, Fosse had more of the game than Luton, but the latter were so dangerous at times as to induce 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."

In conclusion both sides were getting good weather, the back play was even; at half Fosse had the advantage owing to smart work by Jones

and Bell, 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 Daw—were real workers. For a period the Luton forwards fell off, though once they equalised they showed up better than ever.

“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. . . Swift, as captain, showed a splendid example of hard work, and it was not in any wise due to poor generalship that victory did not come.

“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.”

A correspondent writes me as follows:—“Dear Mr. Football Editor,—I suppose you, like the rest of the Luton supporters of football, have given up all hope, and in consequence have ceased to accompany the team away from home. Well, I was optimistic enough to go to Leicester, believing the team would make a good fight, as they always do at Leicester. and, Mr. Editor, I was not disappointed, for what I saw was about the best game that Luton have played this season. The men all arrived on the ground in good time, and in good trim. I believe every man was resolved to do his best to prevent the Fosse running up the score suggested by the London papers. They went on the field determined to do or die—and they did. If they had their deserts they would have come back with two points instead of one. I do not want to pick any of the men for special praise, as they were all good, every man in his place, that was where the ball was. Wherever the ball was, there was a Luton man to take it. I have no hesitation in saying it was the best team Luton have put in the field this season. They never looked like a losing team at any time during the game. Hoping they will keep up the same form, as then we shall not see football extinguished at Luton.—I remain, yours truly, ‘One Who Was There.’”

The one point gained on Saturday sufficed to lift Luton out of the “bottom three,” as will be seen by the following table:—

	Goals.						
	Pld.	Won.	Drn.	Lost.	For.	Agst.	Pts
Bolton Wanderers	21	13	6	2	52	19	32
Sheffield Wednesday ...	19	14	3	2	56	12	31
Leicester Fosse.....	20	11	7	2	32	14	29
Small Heath	19	12	3	4	50	23	27
Newton Heath	19	11	3	5	35	13	25
Lincoln City	21	9	5	7	34	31	23
Burslem Port Vale	20	9	4	7	27	28	22
Grimsby Town	19	8	5	6	38	33	21
Chesterfield	18	8	4	6	37	40	20
Woolwich Arsenal	18	8	3	7	23	23	19
Walsall	21	7	5	9	33	37	19
New Brighton Tower ...	19	4	7	8	29	34	15
Middlesbrough	20	5	5	10	29	36	15
Gainsborough Trinity...	19	4	4	11	27	37	12
Luton Town	19	3	5	11	24	40	11
Barnsley	19	3	4	12	18	49	10
Burton Swifts	19	3	3	13	24	44	9
Loughborough	18	1	4	13	11	47	6