

FOOTBALL.

LUTON v. LINCOLN CITY.

ANOTHER LEAGUE LOSS.

On Saturday the Luton team was at Lincoln in a vain search for League points, the result of the game being a win for the home side by 2--0. The weather was fine, and about 2,500 people witnessed the game. Neither side was at full strength, Lincoln being without one of their usual backs, while Luton lacked the services of Draper, who has had to join his Militia battalion for active service. McCurdy, however, was back in the team, Williams thus being able to resume his place at half-back, while Durrant was included in the forward line, of which McInnes became the centre man. Barnes, Holdstock and J. Brown were the other absentees, the side being as follows:—Daw; Dow and McCurdy; Ellingham, Brock, and Williams; Brown, Durrant, McInnes, Eckford and Dimmock.

Luton won the toss and had the wind in their favour to start with. The home players started off with a dash towards the Luton goal, but they were beaten back, and the Lincoln custodian was called upon to save. Very soon, however, the visitors' goal was subjected to a strong attack, and Daw had several shots to stop. For a time the Luton defenders were successful in their efforts to protect their goal; but at length a hot shot was sent in which Daw could only stop without clearing, and Hartley fastened upon the ball and sent it into the net. After consultation with the linesmen the referee allowed a goal, this success falling to the home side after little more than ten minutes' play. Lincoln again pressed when the ball had been re-started, but Hartley headed wide. Thereafter Luton showed much improved form and did a good deal of attacking, but they were not successful in their attempts to pierce the opposing defence and when half-time came the score still stood in favour of the home side, thus:—

LINCOLN, 1; LUTON, 0.

The opening play of the second half was more promising for Luton, a strong attack being made on the home goal. The players then pulled themselves together and put pressure on the visitors' defence. After Luton had broken away, their forwards were robbed of the ball, and McCairns securing possession made a single-handed run through the Luton defence and scored easily. This woke the Bedfordshire men up a bit and for a time they pressed and often looked like scoring. They could not, however, manage to do the trick and the closing part of the game saw a continual attack on the Luton goal. Corner after corner was obtained, but so stubborn was the defence of the Lutonians that the City men could not add to their score. Daw, fortunately for his side, was in brilliant form and got in the way of many a hot shot, one clearance of his in particular quite astonishing the natives. He kept his charge intact to the call of time, and so the game ended with the score as follows:—

LINCOLN, 2; LUTON, 0.

FOOTBALL FACTS AND FANCIES.

There is not much to be said about Saturday's game at Lincoln. The City team has been doing so well this season that it was not expected that Luton would do any other than lose, and this turned out to be the case.

★

Neither side was at full strength, Lincoln having one of their backs on the sick list, while the Luton team had had to undergo some alterations, a process in which the local directors have, unfortunately, considerable experience.

★

Draper, it seems, has been "ordered out," the Bedfordshire Militia battalion of which he is a member, having been selected for active service. His place was filled by the transference of McInnes to the centre, Darrant being introduced into the right wing. McCurdy was back in the team again.

★

The game was not a great one, although both sides showed good style at times. The Lutonians gave the critics the impression that they deserve to occupy a better position on the League table than they at present can boast, which opinion is shared by a good many folks in Luton.

★

The game only yielded two goals, the home team scoring one in each half, and there was some doubt as to the legality of the first point, for the referee only allowed it after consultation with both his linesmen.

★

This result is a decided improvement on that of some other away matches of this season and is one of which the team has no need to feel ashamed, remembering how strongly the wearers of the green have been going of late.

★

The Luton men owe something to the skill and pluck of their goalkeeper. Daw was in form and gave a fine display, keeping out some particularly warm shots near the close of the game. He was well supported by the backs, Dow and McCurdy as usual playing a cool, clever game.

★

The half-backs worked hard and on the whole effectively, although in their zeal they sometimes did things which the referee thought fit to punish them for by giving free kicks to the enemy.

★

The forward who most caught the eye of the spectators was Eckford, who played not only with much skill but with great determination, and nearly always led the attack when Luton made tracks for their opponents' goal.

★

The home side are a smart lot, with a strong defence and a clever line of forwards, who are well led by M'Cairns, the old Notts. County man. The half-backs were better in defence than attack.

★

The *Athletic Field*, speaking of Daw's performance, says:—"Towards the close the homesters put on heavy pressure, and the Luton defence was sorely taxed. corner succeeding corner, but Daw was impassable, some of his saves being remarkably fine. Once M'Cairns struck the underside of the bar with a bouncing shot, and at another time Daw rushed across his goal in the very nick of time to catch a shot like a bullet from Pugh, which seemed certain to score."

★

The same writer also makes this very complimentary allusion to Eckford:—"Amongst the visitors—uni-

versally admitted a well-balanced and clever team, and one deserving a much higher place in the chart—Eckford and the three defenders struck me as the pick of the players, Eckford's determination being particularly notable. He was never beaten, really, and led many an attack which deserved success."

★

The Lincoln correspondent of the *Athletic News*, says: "The Bedfordshire men were confidently expected to furnish a couple of points, but they made a gallant fight of it before surrendering, last year's result being eventually repeated. At the same time the Strawplaiters must be considered to have got off very lightly, for it was marvellous how, time after time, their citadel escaped downfall." The writer then alludes to some narrow escapes of the Luton goal, at the same time paying a tribute to Daw's custodianship.

★

"Big Tom," the writer in question, speaks of the visitors thus: "Those of us who judged Luton by their position in the chart found that we had underrated them. They played, on the whole, a very decent game, and gave Webb more trouble than he has had of late. Eckford, who appeared at inside left, was particularly smart, while of Daw's achievements I have already spoken. These two were the pick of the eleven. Dow and M'Curdy were neat and clever, but most of their work was unhampered, and they were often in difficulties when hard pressed."

★

Commenting on Saturday's game at Lincoln the *Athletic Field* offers the following mercurial observations:—"Nobody, we suppose, expected Luton to win at Lincoln, so no money was lost over Saturday's reverse, the 14th of its kind in a melancholy record. The flush of enthusiasm which enabled the young bloods of the Bedford town to do what well paid and highly testimonialled veterans had failed at, did not last long, and lack of ability and experience in its absence has settled down almost to uniform ineptitude. The most peculiar part about all these leagues is the wide gap which separates the tail wagers from the ruck, the leaders from the main body."

★

In the ordinary way, one would pass such observations with a shrug of the shoulders; but these are so extraordinary as to prompt the query as to what they mean. When were the "well paid and highly testimonialled veterans" got rid of; and when did the ineptitude begin? This is the paper that was speaking in highly commendatory terms of the Luton players only a few brief weeks ago!

★

Saturday's League matches:—

Lincoln City	2	v.	Luton.....	0
Sheffield Wednesday ...	4	v.	New Brighton ...	0
Middlesbrough	1	v.	Burslem Port Vale	0
Gainsborough.....	3	v.	Leicester Fosse ...	0
Woolwich Arsenal.....	3	v.	Loughborough ...	2
Newton Heath	1	v.	Grimsby	0

★

On Monday the Second League record was:—

On Monday the Second League record was :—

	Plyd.	Won	Lost	Drn.	Pts.	Goals For	Goals Agst.
Sheffield W....	24	17	4	3	37	61	13
Bolton Wand'rs.	24	14	8	7	35	55	22
Leicester Fosse	24	13	8	3	24	37	19
Small Heath	25	15	6	4	34	54	30
Newton Heath	24	15	6	3	33	44	17
Grimsby Town ..	25	12	8	5	29	48	38
Lincoln City	24	12	7	5	29	40	21
Chesterfield	23	11	7	5	27	51	47
Burslem Port Vale	27	10	11	6	26	32	38
Woolwich Arsenal	23	10	9	4	24	29	28
Walsall	23	8	10	6	21	40	41
N. Brighton Tower	24	6	10	3	20	39	44
Middlesbrough ..	26	7	13	6	20	25	50
Burton Swifts....	23	5	13	5	13	31	55
Gainsboro' Trinity	23	5	13	5	15	31	56
Barnsley	23	5	14	4	14	30	53
Luton Town	24	3	14	7	13	29	54
Loughborough ..	23	1	18	4	6	14	64

★

To-morrow (Saturday) the Second League fixtures are :—At Burslem, Chesterfield v. Burslem Port Vale ; at Barnsley, Loughboro' v. Barnsley ; at Leicester, Bolton Wanderers v. Leicester Fosse ; at Luton, Gainsboro' Trinity v. Luton Town ; at New Brighton, Lincoln City v. New Brighton ; at Small Heath, Burton Swifts v. Small Heath ; at Walsall, Middlesbrough v. Walsall ; at Woolwich, Newton Heath v. Woolwich Arsenal.

★

As to the match at Luton to-morrow the *Football Star* expresses the opinion that "Gainsborough should lose at Luton" and gives the possible figures as 3—1 in favour of Luton. How does this compare with Gainsborough 3, Leicester 0, last Saturday's score?

★

In the light of what has happened at Luton the following *Athletic News* reference will be interesting as touching upon the visit to Lincoln :—During the week the City executive had issued an appeal for better support. The inclement weather and the inevitable effects of the war had seriously affected the club's finances, and it was urgently asked that better gates should be accorded the home matches. On the Saturday previous the gate had been valued at only £41, which, of course, is hardly a third of what is needed. Saturday, with brighter weather and half the town still rejoicing over the good news from Natal, saw the people come in better, but still the takings were under £50, and the executive may well feel disappointed. They have chosen a team which has lifted the prestige of the club higher than it ever was before, they have improved the ground very considerably, they entered a team (at their supporters' public request) in the Midland League, and have shown their followers football of almost First League quality—indeed, of quite First League quality sometimes—and an appeal should not have been necessary. Unless fine weather favours the Grimsby and Small Heath matches, the outlook must be gloomy indeed.

★

When I heard that Millwall had succeeded at the third time of asking in eliminating Aston Villa from the English Cup competition I rejoiced that the South had at length proved itself worthy of high honours.

★

As the matter now stands we are certain to have a representative in the final, for either Millwall or Southampton must bite the dust. It will be a great day for Southern football when the champions meet at the Crystal Palace, and should the hope of the South bring back the cup—but that is looking a very long way ahead and may lead to unprofitable speculation.

★

The Chairman of the Luton Junior League (Mr. W. P. Banks) received a letter yesterday (Thursday) from the Duke of Bedford transferring the challenge cup presented by his Grace to the defunct Luton and District League to the Luton Junior League.

FOOTER.