

SOUTHERN LEAGUE.

LUTON v. SOUTHAMPTON.

LUTON BADLY BEATEN.

On Saturday the Luton team set off to Southampton to play the return League game with Southampton. The visitors could hardly entertain any hopes of victory, seeing that Southampton won the game at Luton by 4—3, and Lindsay, furthermore, was absent from the team. White, of the Reserves, was given a trial at right back and he played a very good game. The match was witnessed by a large number of spectators, rather more than Luton are accustomed to at home. The sides were as follows:—

Southampton: Waller; Sharp, Molyneux; Meston, A. Chadwick, Lee; Turner, Yates, Wood, E. Chadwick and Milward.

Luton: Ord; McCurdy and White; Clifford, Holdstock and Williams; Brown, Blessington, Dempsey, Saxton and Durrant.

Southampton won the toss, and had the advantage of a slight wind. The Southampton men were, however, the first to attack, Ord saving some hot shots from Chadwick and Turner. Blessington afterwards got away; but was soon stopped by Molyneux. Saxton looked like scoring; but Sharp cleared in the nick of time. After about half-an-hour's play Sharp sent the ball in the Luton goal-mouth, and Milward headed the first goal. Soon afterwards Turner made a splendid run, and scored with a magnificent shot. Half-time was soon afterwards called with the following scores:

SOUTHAMPTON, 2; LUTON, 0.

On crossing over the Southampton players still pressed, and within a short space Milward headed the third goal. Soon after this Holdstock came into violent collision with one of the Southampton half-backs, with the result that his ankle was damaged. He limped about for some time and endeavoured to continue; but in the end he was obliged to retire. A fourth goal was soon afterwards put on by E. Chadwick, from a pass by Turner, whilst Milward again beat Ord. Luton played a plucky game throughout, but could not penetrate the home defence. Time arrived with the scores:

SOUTHAMPTON, 5; LUTON, 0.

FOOTBALL FACTS AND FANCIES.

Though I was quite prepared on Saturday for a defeat for the Lutonians from the Southampton players, I certainly did not expect that the adverse margin would be anything like so great as it proved. I had thought that the difference between the scores would have been that of a goal or, at the outside, two.

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In the ordinary course I should have concluded that the chances of winning at the seaport town were only fair, so that when I heard that Lindsay was prevented from turning out I prepared myself for a beating.

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It seems, however, that the Bedfordshire men gave a fairly good account of themselves and that it was the enforced retirement of Holdstock, early in the second half, that was responsible for the score rising so rapidly. Lindsay and Holdstock might justly be dominated the backbone of the Luton team, so that when these men were off the chances of the "blues" were very slight indeed.

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There was little that need be said about the game, especially if we are to take notice of what the *Athletic News* says about it. This paper states: "Luton made a fair show for the first 25 minutes, but after that the Strawplaiters were like the man who fell out of the balloon, not in it." The writer goes on to state that Luton were hopelessly outclassed. He says: "The home forwards gave a dazzling exhibition, and the Bedfordshire backs had a terrible time of it. It is something to their credit that the score was not larger."

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Bearing in mind what I have said about absentees, readers will be able to discount the *Morning Leader* statement that "If we are to judge by their doings in this fixture, Luton is not the Luton of old. From the moment that the ball was kicked off it was a case of Luton playing against a stronger side than themselves, as the result of 5 to nil against them shows, and there were varying degrees of success in the way they did it, as may be understood from the fact that thirty-five minutes had gone before first goal fell to Southampton. During that period operations had been confined almost entirely to the Luton half of the ground, but all the evil luck in the world—and Roger Ord—waited on the Saintly attempts to score."

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The same writer says: "For the first half hour of the game it was a question whether Luton's determined defence would take the sting out of the Saintly attack. Once the home side got a lead there never was a doubt about the result. Ord did wonders in goal, but the Luton backs, one of whom was a reserve, were never more than moderate, and the halves couldn't break up the home combination. All the work that their forwards could find for Waller amounted to less than half a dozen shots, for the home backs completely muzzled them."

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In summing up, this scribe talks of Turner as "a perfect nightmare to the Luton defence" and says that the difference between the team was that Southampton had the combination and Luton lacked it.

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The *Daily Mail* on Monday observed: "The complete collapse of Luton at Southampton was not generally expected. We know that the Hampshire men are very formidable on their own ground, but there was nothing in their recent form to lead one to suppose that they would beat the conquerors of Queen's Park Rangers by five goals to none. We are inclined to believe that this form on the part of Luton is quite too bad to be true."

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The *Daily Chronicle* said: "Southampton, assisted in goal by the amateur W. H. Waller, scored five goals to nil against Luton. It should be stated, however, that the visitors lost the services of their tall centre half-back Holdstock at half-time, up to which they had not disgraced themselves. After this the Southampton forwards had their own way."

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The Southern League fixtures on Saturday were as follows:—

Southampton	5	bt	Luton	0
Tottenham Hotspur ...	2	bt	Millwall	1
Queen's Park Rangers ...	4	bt	Bristol Rovers ...	3
Reading	2	bt	New Brompton ...	1
Gravesend	0	dr	West Ham United ...	0
Chatham	1	dr	Watford	1
Bristol City	2	bt	Swindon	0

Home teams.

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The League table on Monday was as follows:—

	Played.	Won.	Lost.	Dr n.	For	Agst	Pts
Bristol City	16	12	2	2	43	18	26
Southampton	14	11	2	1	33	15	23
Perthmouth	12	9	2	1	24	11	19
Millwall	15	9	5	1	33	22	19
Bristol Rovers	13	8	4	1	28	15	17
West Ham United	13	6	5	2	18	12	14
Reading	13	5	4	4	14	10	14
Tottenham Hotspur	11	5	4	2	16	13	12
Queen's Park Rangers	13	5	7	1	23	22	11
Luton	11	5	6	0	18	19	10
New Brompton	13	4	7	2	16	20	10
Kettering	11	3	6	2	14	21	8
Gravesend	12	2	7	3	12	36	7
Swindon Town	13	2	9	2	8	26	6
Watford	14	2	10	2	13	29	6
Chatham	14	2	10	2	9	40	6

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To-morrow (Saturday) we are to entertain the Chatham team at Luton in the Southern League fixture. It will be remembered that in the first match at Chatham the Kent team won by 2-0. That, however, was at a time when the Luton team was all at sixes and sevens. I hope the result will be a much better one to-morrow.

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I must say that the Christmas programme of the Luton club is not a very attractive one. The team is away at Kettering on Christmas Day in search of Southern League points and on Boxing Day the players will be at home to Northampton in the United League.

The last Saturday in the year the "blues" are due at Bristol, where they are to meet the redoubtable City team. I suppose we must make up our minds to sustain a defeat; but I hope the luck will be a little better for Luton on this occasion than was the case at Southampton.

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I am glad to be able to congratulate the Reserves on yet another victory. This time the victims were the Rothwell players, who gave them a very good game. I wish the seniors were doing as well in the way of wins as the juniors, but I must suppose that we must not expect anything so good as that.

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The draw for the intermediate round of the English Cup competition has favoured Luton, as the "blues" are to play at home. The visitors will be Bristol Rovers, and I should think the chances are in favour of the locals.

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The teams have met already this season, the contest taking place at Bristol, when the Westerners succeeded in winning a hard game by the only goal scored. The Luton men ought to manage to turn the tables on January 5.

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The *Sporting Life* on Wednesday had the following:—"The luck of the draw was certainly dead against the South on Monday, when the clubs were paired for the new intermediate round of the Association Cup competition. Four of the best of the Southern clubs were drawn in pairs and Reading or Bristol City, Luton or Bristol Rovers, must be knocked out by a Southern 'brother.' Thus at once go two out of the 10 possible representatives of the South in the competition proper. The other three Southern clubs taking part in the intermediate round are not much better placed."

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"Only one of the three was drawn at home, and that one, West Ham United to wit, must needs come out of the hat with the strongest club of the whole twenty—viz., Liverpool, one of the most formidable clubs in the Football League. That means 'good-bye' to West Ham. Then Portsmouth have to go to Newton Heath, and the chances of their returning victorious are, to say the least, problematical, for the Heathens know how to tackle Cup tie visitors. Woolwich Arsenal have a better chance at Darwen, but, even here, the South cannot feel safe, for the Arsenal eleven have not the knack of winning 'away' on important occasions."

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"There is thus a jolly outlook for the South, and to make quite cheerful the professional pessimist, and to gladden the heart of Mark Tapley, for Southerners will certainly be entitled to some credit if they can feel jolly in such circumstances. It will be a bit of luck if even one of the three Southern clubs which have to meet Northerners pulls off its match; and, taking this as the most cheerful view possible, we in the South have the prospect of seeing six Southern clubs (and no more) taking part in the competition proper, viz., Southampton, Millwall and Tottenham Hotspur (excused all rounds preceding the competition proper), Reading or Bristol City, Luton or Bristol Rovers, and either Woolwich Arsenal, Portsmouth, or West Ham. Of these three, Portsmouth for choice—but it is only a chance."

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"We get, therefore, down to this—that the introduction of the intermediate round will bring down the South's representation in the competition proper to a certain five clubs and a possible sixth. But, taking certainties only into account, Southerners will have two clubs less in the final and most important part of the contest instead of the seven that would have been guaranteed to them if their Divisional winners had, as in previous years, gone straight into the competition proper."

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"To have the South guaranteed only five places against the 24 guaranteed to the North is just a bit unfair; and we shall look to the F.A. executive to see that, in future, the South's share in the competition proper is made to depend less on the luck of the draw than has been the case this season. Apart from this aspect of the case, we like the intermediate round, and think it an improvement on the old order of things."

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Next week I shall, according to custom, give a brief account of the doings of the local club in the first half of the season with some comparative figures.

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This being the last opportunity I shall have of addressing my readers before the festive season arrives I take this opportunity of wishing them a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. This wish is extended to the players and officials of the club.

FOOTER.