

THE UNITED LEAGUE.

LUTON v. NORTHAMPTON.

A CLOSELY-CONTESTED GAME.

On Boxing Day Luton entertained the Northampton team on the Town Ground. Luton had not their full team, Lindsay, Holdstock and Blessington being unable to appear. Their places were filled by Reserves. The visitors wore red and white shirts and the contrast between them and the blue shirts of the Lutonians was very striking. The teams were as follows:

Luton: Ord; White and McCurdy; Dawson, Farr and Williams; Brown, Clifford, Barker, Saxton and Durrant.

Northampton: Bullimer; Johnston and R. Warner; Pell, Murrell and Howe; Pendred, Miller, Stewart, F. Warner and Cox.

Referee: Mr. F. Beardsley (Plumstead); Linesmen: Mr. A. Jones (Northampton) and Mr. E. Gibbs (Luton).

Farr lost the toss and, in consequence, Luton had to play against the wind. Play was very even for a little time and then on account of some very good passing, the Northampton players looked rather dangerous. The danger was however, soon averted by some pretty play by White. A little later Brown made a fine centre but no advantage was gained. Following a throw-in for Northampton Ord gave a splendid exhibition of his skill in goal. Some more good play by the "blues" was followed by a shot with which the visitors' custodian had no difficulty. A foul throw was very soon recorded against Luton, but was resultless. Clifford very neatly took the ball away from his opponent, who retaliated by tripping him up. Following some good play by the Luton front rank Ord made another splendid save. McCurdy badly missed the ball, and a corner resulted. The Northampton men started to press again, and Ord sent out splendidly. McCurdy soon made amends for his miskick by clearing well in front of the Luton goal. Durrant had a good run up the field and passed to Clifford, who, with an open goal, shot high over the bar. Farr was responsible for some very neat play for which he was well applauded. Cox had an open goal soon after, but McCurdy jumped in and nothing was scored. Some first-class play by the visitors resulted in the ball just missing the post. "Roland" put in a fine shot, and R. Warner and Bullimer came into violent collision with each other in their efforts to stop the "leather" from entering the goal. Durrant had a nice run up the field when he was pulled up for off-side, which aroused the ire of the greater portion of the spectators. Saxton shot well, the ball entering the goal. It transpired, however, that a player had been fouled before the goal was scored, and the Luton players had to relinquish the point. Durrant had another good run up the field, but he shot over the bar. The visitors began to press again, and F. Warner had another open goal when he, to the surprise of those watching, failed to score. Saxton took the ball up and passed to Durrant, who missed. In trying to make amends for his failure the same player again missed, and so when half-time came the scores were:

LUTON, 0; NORTHAMPTON, 0.

On play being resumed Northampton had some very narrow escapes of scoring. In turn Luton pressed and one of the visitors' backs shot over the bar. Following some pretty play by the home forwards Williams shot wide. Durrant made himself conspicuous by his good

playing and Clifford, with another open goal, shot badly. Brown was rather badly injured, but was able to resume play again after a few minutes. The Northampton custodian brought off a good save. Saxton shot over the bar when it seemed impossible to miss scoring. Ord had another chance of showing his ability, and he was not slow to take it. Saxton made a splendid run up the field and passed to Durrant, who scored. Soon after Saxton, with a good shot, scored Luton's second goal. Stewart very quickly tried to equalise and the result was a goal for Northampton. Eventually when the game was concluded the scores were :—

LUTON, 2 ; NORTHAMPTON, 1.

FOOTBALL FACTS AND FANCIES

The collapse of the Chatham Club—and the consequent failure to fulfil the engagement with Luton which had been fixed for Saturday—caused some astonishment in Luton. It was known that the Kent club was in a bad way; but it was not imagined that matters were in so desperate a state.

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It seems that the directors have been forced to take the course they have adopted by the fact that the financial condition of the organisation has been going from bad to worse. There is in some sense a parallel between the two clubs—at least so far as the past is concerned.

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There is, it appears, an overdraft of £1,600 upon the Chatham ground, stands and other property, and at the beginning of this season there was an overdraft at the bankers of £260, besides liabilities of £205. The outcome of this season's play has been that £170 has been added to the overdraft and an increase of the liabilities.

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The "gates" have been getting worse and worse, and at length the time arrived when the directors felt compelled to take a decided step. They accordingly wrote to the players, offering to pay them a share of the "gates" and stating very plainly that "the company are unable to further continue payment of wages upon the present basis."

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A meeting between directors and players was held, when Perrins (formerly of Luton) was the spokesman for the professionals. It was bluntly stated by the "pros" that they were averse to entering into a sharing arrangement and that they would refuse to come to Luton unless the week's wages were forthcoming on Friday as usual.

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A second meeting was held, with the result that the players adhered to their demands and the directors resolved to disband the team. Accordingly the secretary was instructed to communicate with Luton, Gravesend and New Brompton, cancelling the fixtures in the Christmas programme.

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It is inevitable that the players should consider that they have been unjustly treated, and it is also stated that many supporters of the club severely criticise what is described as "the hurried way in which the directors arrived at a definite determination."

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So far as Luton footballers are concerned they will sympathise with the Chatham Club in its misfortune. At the same time they regret that the home side should be put to such a heavy loss as was entailed by the inability to arrange another match.

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The Chatham directors might very well have come to their decision earlier in the week, when there would have been time to make another fixture. To land a professional club with heavy expenses into such a position as the Luton authorities found themselves in was neither considerate nor friendly.

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The only point which can be regarded as satisfactory with reference to the affair is that if the losses and wins of the Chatham club have to be taken out of the League table one of the Luton team's losses will be wiped out. But that is poor compensation for the loss of Saturday's gate.

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Saturday's Southern League games were:—

• New Brompton	...	...	2	dr	Kettering	...	...	2
• Swindon	...	...	4	bt	Queen's P'k Rangers	...	...	2
• Bristol Rovers	...	...	0	dr	Reading	...	...	0
• Watford	...	...	0	dr	Bristol City	...	...	0
• Portsmouth	...	...	5	bt	Gravesend	...	...	1
• Millwall	...	...	2	bt	West Ham United	...	...	0

The Millwall and West Ham game was stopped ere full time owing to fog, as was also the Watford and Bristol City match.

• Home teams.

"J.M.D.," writing in the *Evening News* concerning the collapse of the Chatham Club, says: "We shall be told that the Chatham club died an unnatural death—that it imbibed poison, and succumbed to a sort of peripheral neuritis, as it were. The death of the Chatham club was due to lack of blood and brains—to an extremely anæmic condition of interest and support both inside and outside of the organisation. It had been treated most carefully and conscientiously with that best-known antidote, money; but apparently not even such a powerful restorative could revive it."

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"Who dare say that professionalism has been even a partial success in the South of England? How many professional clubs in the South are financially sound at the present moment? Why all this clamour for an increase in the number of professional clubs when a large percentage of those now in existence have to balance their losses by the aid of tea-cosy bazaars on the Church principle, Christmas draws, and shooting competitions? Is it to be wondered at that the sport is almost lost sight of, while this fierce struggling and striving to make both ends meet is going on? The truth, the naked truth, about professional football is that not one man in a hundred understands anything at all about its requirements and its responsibilities."

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"Otherwise soberminded men have been first bewildered and then fascinated by the glamour which surrounds the successful First League club. As a consequence we have professional clubs in districts in the South of England which are quite incapable of supporting them. Not even the splendid sporting town of Brighton could maintain a professional club for more than a year. In spite of the stern object lessons which Brighton United and Chatham supply, the clamourers for more professional football and the better government which professional football is supposed to induce are as loud-mouthed and impatient as ever. Their immediate purpose is to transform the London Association. What pernicious teachers they are, and what arrant humbugs!"

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"Close students of football can easily find facts sufficient to justify the opinion that professional football, taken all round, is neither an unmixed blessing nor an unqualified success. Ever since I can remember the leading professional teams have been seeking eagerly for ways and means whereby the financial pot might be kept boiling. The proposal to pool the gates was an indication of severe strain and weakness if it was an indication of anything. The transfer system was a spurious and unjust trading implement, which was brought into being for the purpose of saving certain clubs from the fate which has befallen Chatham. On almost every side the public interest in Socker football was first of all miscalculated and then egregiously misdirected. At the birth of professionalism players had all their own way, and thousands of pounds were spent upon them, which ought to have been saved. Nowadays the professional club is on top, and a very excellent example of tyranny and oppression it often provides."

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"What we want at the present moment is a strong man with a loud voice who will proclaim the evils of professionalism and warn the public against its dangers. Professionalism is not for every prosperous village or town. Where it flourishes the players must be free and unfettered, while the proper proportion of regard for the sporting, as against the purely commercial, side of the game must be accorded. I have not the slightest hesitation in saying that in many localities the public has ceased to love football for football's sake. The people have been taught to think of nothing but League points, positions, cups and championships. This pandering to the appetite for fictitious interest has sickened many of the earlier followers of the sport, while it has robbed the game itself of much of its scientific beauty."

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"Football is primarily an exercise and not a sort of circus entertainment, and, therefore, above and beyond all things the amateur spirit must be encouraged, and young men taught and admonished to play for their health's sake. Some people regard professionalism as a necessary evil. I am entirely opposed to this view. It is possible for professionalism not only to be virtuous but noble. It must, however, be suitably administered and governed by means that are not the mere product of panting enthusiasm and boundless in experience. The first move in the game of regeneration is in the hands of the public. Let the stern fact be recognised that we have more than enough professional clubs at the present moment. There is nothing so clogs the public taste as a surfeit. We want professional clubs, but only in districts that can support them. Chatham happened to be situated in a dry region in which there was not sufficient nourishment in the shape of public love for the game. Hence their tears."

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I have quoted thus copiously because, unpalatable though these observations may be, they are absolutely

true. In the case of Luton the club has all along had to struggle along against financial difficulty and waning support, and there is not the slightest doubt that were the team to lose matches at home the "gates" would become worse than they have been this season.



To-morrow (Saturday) the Lutonians are engaged at Bristol, where they are to attempt the task of taking down the numbers of the redoubtable City players. It is extremely unlikely that they will succeed.



It is rather curious that the "blues" should be measured against the two Bristol sides in successive Saturdays. As the time draws near for the Cup-tie, we at Luton are becoming more confident. With a representative team the homesters ought not to experience much difficulty in qualifying for the competition proper.



The prophets, though suggesting that the game will be closely contested, seem to think it highly probable that the Lutonians will emerge with credit from the ordeal. But is not that unanimity rather a reason for feeling a wee bit doubtful?



In view of the fact that the match with Bristol City will have to be played ere the half season is completed, I have decided to hold over my promised review of the four months' play until next week.



The game with Northampton on Boxing Day showed how useful the second eleven players are when some of the first eleven players have been injured or are unable, through some cause or other, to play.



Farr was really very useful at half-back and once or twice he puzzled his opponents not a little. Not less to be complimented was the display given by White at back. They are both promising youngsters and will always come in useful in such a case as that on Boxing Day.



Clifford played forward in this match, but I would rather he had been in his old position as he seemed to forget he was a forward. I do not mean it to be thought that his display at forward was not good, for he was very troublesome to the Northampton defence.



I was sorry that the captain was not present, everybody seemed to miss him. On either side you heard "Oh, if Lindsay were only here," etc. I hope that he will be well enough to play in the cup-tie.