



SOUTHERN LEAGUE.

LUTON v. WATFORD.

Those who expected big results from the Luton Football team at the commencement of the season have been rudely disappointed. The Club at the outset did certainly give every indication of giving a good account of itself, but latterly it has sustained a succession of heavy reverses, and if it does not rapidly pull itself together, its already sadly impoverished exchequer will suffer more and more. After the defeat by Bristol Rovers at home on the previous Saturday, a success at Watford on the latter's own ground was not very confidently anticipated.

It was not known until nearly the end of the week that Lindsay, who has been incapacitated for some weeks, would be in a condition to play, and when this was made public the hopes of the local enthusiasts brightened. But the team which tried conclusions with Watford last Saturday was but a shadow of its former self. Lindsay, although announced to play, was not to be relied upon, and in the end the result justified the suspicion. Saxton was again left at home with his arm in a sling; Brown, who of late has been displaying very poor form, stood down in favour of Dimmock; Holdstock, who throughout the season has been playing brilliantly at centre-half was absent injured, and Hawkes and Garrett, both reserves, were given a trial.

About 500 persons from Luton took advantage of the extra facilities offered to see the match, and at the kick-off between 3,000 and 4,000 spectators were present. The teams lined out as follows—

Luton : Ord ; McCurdy and Lindsay ; Garrett, Williams and Clifford ; Dimmock, Tierney, Blessington, Hawkes, and Durrant.

Watford : Hammett ; Cother and Nidd ; Sharp, Good and Jeffrey ; Price, Wilcox, Parkinson, Allan, and E. A. Varley.

Referee : G. G. Landragin.

The fog, which had been very thick in the morning, cleared about mid day, and the match was played under favourable conditions with the exception that the turf was somewhat slippery. The toss went in favour of the visitors. Parkinson kicked off for Watford, who had to defend the Park goal. The Luton forwards at once went off with a rush and attacked vigorously. Watford retaliated, and for a time the game was very fast. Ord was called upon several times to clear, and the custodian of the home goal also had a busy time.

For the first ten minutes Luton played gamely but after that it was apparent Lindsay was in trouble. He ran with difficulty, and the defence lost its sting. Watford gradually gained the ascendancy. Price did yeoman service for his side, and his colleagues in the forward line far outplayed their antagonists. A corner was soon forced, and Parkinson scored a fine goal. To the surprise of everybody the point was disallowed, it being alleged that the "offside" rule had been infringed. This was a lucky escape for Luton, but Watford were not to be denied. The Luton forwards, with the exception perhaps of Blessington and Durrant, were extremely weak and lacked combination.

The play was for a time confined to the Luton territory and another corner soon followed. The visitors made a spasmodic rush down the ground, Blessington and Tierney having a shot at goal. Hammett cleared several good shots, and the game was once more transferred to the Luton preserves. Here a protracted struggle took place, the visitors' goal being placed in jeopardy over and over again. Lindsay still stuck gamely to his post, and ably assisted by McCurdy danger was averted for a long period. After about 35 minutes' play, however, Sharp took possession just as Luton was getting well away, and passing very judiciously to Price the latter centred, and Parkinson scored amid great excitement and enthusiasm. The shot gave Ord no possible chance to effect a clearance, as it was taken close in. Watford, although still continuing to have the best of matters, failed to increase their lead, and at half-time the score stood—

Watford 1, Luton 0.

After the interval the composition of the Luton team was considerably altered. Lindsay, who was lame, was playing at outside right, Durrant going outside left, Dimmock to half, and Clifford at right full back in the place of Lindsay. Throughout this half, Watford had all the play, and Luton were a thoroughly beaten team. Hammett was hardly called upon to save. Blessington, Tierney, and Durrant occasionally made futile attempts to get through, but Luton never looked like scoring once. The feature of this half was the fine display of Ord in goal. Time after time he effected some marvellous saves.

During the latter part of the game Lindsay, who had pluckily tried hard to retrieve the fortunes of the day, left the field; Ord was temporarily incapacitated by a kick, and Dimmock was carried helpless off the field with an injured knee. After half-an-hour's play Parkinson brought off a capital run, and passing well across the goal, Varley had very little difficulty in beating Ord. Luton had now to finish the game with nine men. Watford continued to press, but no further scoring took place, and the game resulted as follows:—
Watford 2, Luton 0.

Football Notes.

If Luton do not rapidly improve, they will inevitably find themselves at the bottom of the Southern League table. The misfortunes that have overtaken the team these last few weeks have been due to a variety of causes, and the fault cannot be attributed either to the original members of the team or the directorate. The latter are certainly to be sympathised with. They have done everything possible to rehabilitate the team, but with ill success; and the financial condition of the Club is reported to be bad.

The reverse at Watford was not unexpected. The composition of the team which played in the early part of the season had been greatly altered. It is true that Lindsay, the backbone of the eleven, and whose presence on the ground infuses confidence in the men, was present, but it was very doubtful policy on the part of the directors to have played him at all on Saturday. His leg was far from well, and after playing about 10 minutes he was as good as useless.

The forward line in the Luton ranks, always a weak spot, was again most unsatisfactory, and had they remained on the ground an additional 90 minutes it is very doubtful whether they would have scored. As an evidence of their impotence, it is worth mentioning that throughout the latter half Hammett was never called upon to clear once. The services of Holdstock, another of our invalids, were greatly missed. At the time of writing, we understand that the directors are in negotiation with Gray, of Grimsby, to play centre-forward to-morrow (Saturday).

The question of a good centre-forward this season has been a thorn in the sides of the directors, although of late their name has been legion. Burbage, Barker, Saxton, Blessington, and Dempsey have all been tried. The performance of Gray, if he arrives, will be watched with interest.

At the meeting of the Beds. Football Association on Saturday evening, some important business was transacted, chief among which the draw for the next round of the Beds. Cup took place. The Luton clubs have good fixtures as a result, the Reserves meeting Leighton Cee Springs at Luton, while the other match is announced under the re-played Cup match in another column.

To-morrow (Saturday) Luton are at home again, when they meet the Queen's Park Rangers once more, this time in the Southern League. The Rangers have been "bucking up" since the New Year, and on Saturday they defeated Kettering by 2 goals to 0, while on the previous Saturday they gained their first victory on foreign soil by defeating Watford by 1-0. Luton, however, have been on the down grade, and their defeat at Watford was sorely felt by their supporters. The forwards are weak, and have only scored two goals since they defeated the Rangers on Dec. 15th last, and will have to show improved form if they wish to retire victorious to-morrow.