

THE SOUTHERN LEAGUE.

WATFORD v. LUTON TOWN.

Played at Watford on Saturday. Result:—

Watford	2 goals.
Luton	nil.

The teams were as follow:—

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

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

Referee, Mr. C. G. Landragin.

Although Luton were beaten at Watford, according to the official version, by precisely the same margin as in the previous week's Cup-tie, there was a vast difference in the two displays, and the difference was all in favour of Saturday's performance. In the Cup-tie, the men were miles below their proper form, whereas at Watford, they did their best in the face of great discouragement.

Under ordinary circumstances, Watford play a very robust game—so rumour hath it—and robustness was decidedly the great feature of their display in this match. Some might call it by an uglier name. They had evidently been saving themselves up for the occasion, and they went at it baldheaded. At times the play was so absolutely reckless that one can only marvel that accidents were not of frequent occurrence.

Luton, in their sadly crippled state, were in no condition to withstand tactics such as these, and when Lindsay's leg went wrong again soon after the start, their position was a very unfortunate one indeed. Still, they fought desperately while there was a glimmer of hope of saving the game, and they deserve credit for the plucky fight they made.

If Lindsay had only been all right, I feel certain that Luton would have succeeded in fully holding their own, and perhaps a little more than that, but when Watford discovered that the Luton skipper was practically useless, they played on to him unmercifully, the ball being kept in his quarter as much as possible. It was their proper game, of course, and showed that all their sense was not in their feet, but it was hard lines on Lindsay and Luton nevertheless.

There were some three thousand persons to witness the match, among them being about 130 from Luton. The fog which had prevailed in the morning lifted in the afternoon, and though the light was not of the best, it was sufficiently good to allow the spectators to get a clear view of the proceedings. Play at the start was of a give-and-take character, and so desperately fast that it was evident both sides were bent on securing the victory. Presently Watford obtained a corner, and from a scrimmage resulting therefrom, Parkinson put through.

The spectators cheered, but were chagrined to find that the referee had given a goal-kick instead of a goal, owing to a supposed infringement of the offside rule. Luton retaliated, and Hawkes got through from a pass by Blessington, but was given offside. Luton came again, however, and Tierney put in a lovely shot which Hammett saved, whilst directly after Blessington sent just over.

A fine run by Sharp was the next feature, the Watford half-back making a lot of ground and passing out to Price, who centred, but Wilcox shot badly. Blessington got in a good one at the other end, and then Watford again attacking, it was discovered that Lindsay was practically out of it, as he was quite unable to run at any speed. He stuck to his work as far as possible, and was often able to get in a useful kick, but of course the Luton defence was greatly weakened by his inability to get over the ground.

Luton tried all they knew, Clifford especially distinguishing himself, but Watford redoubled their efforts when they saw how the land lay, and concentrated their attention on pushing their advantage at Luton's weak spot. Eventually, Sharp showed up with another good run, and Price centred to Parkinson, who stood in the mouth of goal and easily put through. Luton appealed for offside, but Mr. Landragin gave it a goal, though it seemed to me a very much more doubtful point than the one he had disallowed.

In the few minutes that remained before the interval, Ord saved beautifully from three fine shots by Varley, Wilcox, and Price respectively, and when the teams crossed over Watford were still leading by a goal to nil. When Luton took up their positions again, the spectators were much astonished to see that Lindsay had gone to outside-right, Durrant having been transferred to the left, whilst Dimmock had retired to the middle line, and Clifford had gone back.

The change did not improve matters. Lindsay remained long enough to have a shot at goal from a centre by Durrant, and to place a corner which he himself had obtained, but he then retired altogether. Most of the aggressive work was done by Watford, but now and then Luton created a diversion, and once much amusement was caused by Blessington being given offside when he was nowhere near the ball, which was kicked by one of the Watford backs.

Ord had a fair amount of work to do, and he did it admirably, though he was handicapped by a kick he received in one particularly fierce scrimmage. At last, however, Parkinson got down the field, and passed forward to Varley, who was standing absolutely clear of everybody, and had no difficulty in netting the ball. It appeared to many to be a glaring case of offside, but again a goal was given, and the issue was now placed beyond doubt.

The subsequent play was marred by an accident to Dimmock, who twisted his knee badly, and had to be carried off the field. Luton thus finished the game with only nine men, but there was no more scoring, and so Watford won as stated. Strangely enough, considering the vigour shown, there was very little ill-feeling, though once or twice Parkinson seemed bent upon provoking Clifford, who, by the way, was about the best man on the field. McCurdy also played a very good game. Williams, as usual, put in a vast amount of work, and Garrett was very far from a failure, his speed enabling him to be of considerable service on some critical occasions.

Blessington was not as conspicuous at centre as he invariably is in his own position at inside-right, but he was the most effective of the forwards. Tierney played a hard game, and if he had only passed a little more freely, would have been the best of the bunch. Hawkes made some very pretty touches in the earlier part of the play, but had not sufficient weight to enable him to show to the best advantage in a match where weight was of more consequence than skill. Durrant never got fairly going.

The Watford men were a better team than I expected to see, but Luton at full strength would beat them three times out of four. The backs were reliable without being brilliant, and the halves were a set of hard workers, Sharp being the most conspicuous of the three, though Good is a very useful centre-half. Parkinson, perhaps, was the most dangerous of the forwards, who, however, were all playing at the top of their form. Indeed, it is said to have been Watford's best game this season.

Commenting upon the play, the "Watford Leader" says:—"That Watford were fully entitled to win none can doubt, but at the same time we must sympathise with Luton, who were sadly disorganised by the accident to Lindsay, and on the whole they were decidedly fortunate to escape without a heavier defeat. For that they have chiefly to thank Roger Ord, their goal-keeper, who gave a great exhibition between the sticks. To McCurdy, too, no small credit is due, for he got through his work in good style. The forwards were, however, disappointing. Blessington, who was taking the centre position, was not at all at home, and failed to keep his line in hand. Tierney was about the only man to do himself justice. Durrant might learn with advantage to keep his temper within bounds."