

WEST HAM v. LUTON.

Played at West Ham on Saturday. Result:—

West Ham 4 goals.

Luton 1 goal.

The players turned out as follows:—

West Ham—Griffiths; Fair and Eccles; Bigden, Yenson, and Blythe; Allan, Farrell, Grassam, Wallace, and Barnes.

Luton—Frail; Lindsay and Williams; F. Hawkes, White, and R. Hawkes; Durrant, Blessington, Davidson, Moody, and Allsopp.

The previous week against Tottenham everything seemed to turn out favourably, but by an unwelcome twist of fortune's wheel it was just the opposite on Saturday. It is curious how year after year certain teams prove a big stumbling-block to Luton, while no matter how well others are going they usually have the worst of the deal when they meet the local players. It will be remembered that last season the Hammers were one of the teams that secured four points from Luton. The corresponding match to that of Saturday resulted in a 4—1 victory in favour of West Ham, after one of the most curious games it is possible to conceive, for on that occasion the losers were by far the better side, and the verdict would have been much fairer if the scores had been exactly reversed.

While this could scarcely be said of the latest duel, still the fact remains that Griffiths had at least double the shots to deal with to those sent in to Frail. On several occasions Frail has come in for severe censure because of his running-out tactics, but I do not remember one mistake of this nature on Saturday; certainly he was at his post each time the ball was placed past him.

When the team, accompanied by the usual score or so supporters that follow them on their London excursions, left Luton the weather outlook was bright and cheerful, but by the time the wilderness known as West Ham Memorial Grounds was reached the day had developed into a thoroughly nasty one for outdoor sports. I should say that not more than 1,000 spectators were present, and as anyone who has visited the ground will know, this number can be tucked into one corner of the enclosure with ease.

Lindsay won the toss and naturally played with the gale at his back, but Luton's good fortune ended at this point. Within the first quarter of an hour it looked all over another win, but either the final effort was lacking or Griffiths came to the rescue in fine style and no goals came along. About the first item of interest was a burst through by Bob Hawkes, à la Tottenham, and he passed the ball along to Davidson, who tried Griffiths with a good shot which he got away, only to have it sent back from the Luton half-back line. But again the home custodian was able to deal with what appeared a certain scorer, amid the applause of the shivering spectators.

Keeping up the pressure, a corner fell to Luton, and Allsopp placed this well on the opposite wing, where Durrant was standing. The Luton right-winger returned nicely to Moody, who was in a fine position for scoring, but just as the visiting "crowd" were congratulating themselves upon an opening goal, Bert shot yards over, thus missing one of the easiest chances of the match. Farrell attempted a single-handed run, but Frail came slightly out of his area and rebbed him before he could get in a shot. After Davidson had almost succeeded in finding the net from a free kick for hands against one of the Hammers, a diversion was made by the home left wing. Barnes tricking Lindsay, put a centre right across the mouth of goal, but Frail judged this nicely, and disposed of it in good style.

With these two exceptions Frail was unemployed for the first half-hour, but his vis-a-vis was kept hard at it, Allsopp almost knocking him through with a terrific shot about this time. But Griffiths stuck to the ball, although Moody attempted to bundle him through, ball as well. The rain had now ceased, and the spectators came out into the open for a bit.

Durrant went off the field through a strain, and Lindsay sent Bob Hawkes over to the right wing, Blessington taking the outside position. This left the home right wing with no one but Williams to meet, and undoubtedly led directly to the scoring of the West Ham opening goal. Farrell being unmarked, let drive, and although Frail threw himself full length he could not get at the ball, which appeared to shoot after touching the ground. It looked rather a simple point, and was really the first time a decent shot had been put in, while several more likely-looking customers had been kept out at the opposite end. Thus Luton were a goal down after having most of the play.

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At the half-hour stage Durrant came on again, but was quite unable to run, and proved of little further use, although he kept his place to the finish. To make matters worse, Davidson fell and badly cut his knee, and as Moody's ankle was troubling him, the attack was far below the form of the previous week. Still, from a pass from Luton's centre, Allsopp let drive with a cross shot which only just missed the post, Griffiths apparently being well beaten.

With half-time approaching rapidly, Allan raced through and centred to Grassam, who was standing quite close in; indeed, it looked suspiciously like offside, but the referee did not pull him up, and he headed past Frail making the score two to nil. Although this practically settled the result, Blessington tried two or three long shots, one of which Griffiths almost let through, but no one was up to take advantage of his slip. On another occasion Griffiths was forced to concede a corner in order to save another long drive from Blessington, but it was badly placed and half-time was called without further scoring.

As the wind had dropped considerably, there was still a chance for Luton, and they started off after crossing over as if they meant to retrieve the situation. Moody sent in a hot shot which Fair stopped without any idea of where it came from, being badly winded, and the game was stopped for two or three minutes, although he did not leave the field. A good opportunity to reduce the lead was spoilt by Davidson over-running the ball after a spell of good work on the part of F. Hawkes, who had forced his way through and punted well up into Griffiths' vicinity.

But a further disaster was in store for Luton as a result of a foul against Lindsay, between the penalty area and the touch-line. He brought Barnes down rather heavily, and was spoken to by the referee for kicking the ball at the linesman after the whistle had blown. Eccles came up to take the place kick and landed it nicely in front, Grassam sending it through, Frail having no chance with this. Last season White scored Luton's only goal, and he almost repeated his success on Saturday while Davidson held the man off, but Luton's luck was dead out, and the ball went behind.

Midway through the second half the home attack were having the better of the exchanges on the whole, and a couple of throws-in near the Luton corner flag could not be got away, Bigden ultimately getting in a dropping shot which Frail completely misjudged, evidently thinking it was going wide, but it sailed just inside the extreme corner high up, making the score four goals without any response from Luton. Luton's efforts were at last rewarded, and Davidson had the satisfaction of netting a pass from his left wing some 13 minutes before time. From this point to the close the game continued even, each side holding the advantage in turn, although Luton put in the more dangerous attempts, one from Durrant especially deserving to score, but Griffiths just got it out from beneath the bar, and the whistle sounded with the score:—West Ham, 4 goals; Luton, 1 goal.

Luton certainly put in quite double the shots to those of their opponents, but Griffiths, aided at times by a bit of luck, kept out all attempts until the game was well won. Still, it is goals only that count, and credit must be given to the winners for taking full advantage of their somewhat lucky openings. It could not be said that the victory was due to any superiority in midfield, for Luton were much the cleverer side. Allsopp continues in fine form but although he

puts in several hot shots during most games, it would tell more to the advantage of his Club if he would keep the ball in front, and allow the inside men a chance to score. Blessington has taken to shooting oftener, and he will be well advised to keep it up, for he can shoot, as his record in previous seasons demonstrates. No fewer than three members of the front string were more or less cripples at the close, for Moody's ankle was very much swollen. There is, therefore, a little excuse for the severe defeat for the second season on that pitch. Fred Hawkes was the pick of the middle line, the heavy going being against his namesake, who is not able to train in the same manner as the other members of the team because of his business. Although not in such fine form as against the Spurs, the backs were not to blame as a rule, while except for the shots that scored, Frail had comparatively an idle afternoon.

Given fine weather, there should be a record gate on Saturday, when the probable champions of the Southern League will pay a visit to the Bury Park enclosure. As is well known by now, there is to be a shilling gate, but no collection. Some, of course, always grumble when the charge for admission is increased, but those who have the future welfare of the Club at heart will agree, I think, that the directors are acting wisely in this instance, as half the money taken will go to the close season fund.

Notwithstanding the fact that some of the players got hurt last Saturday, Luton will probably be at full strength. The only doubtful starter is Durrant and if he is unable to turn out his place will be occupied by Gall. Southampton will bring a strong team, the only absentee being Molyneux, who is due to play for England at Sheffield. Harrison, the centre-forward, about whom so much has been said and written lately, will turn out for the visitors. This player has scored sixteen goals in about five matches.

I understand that by arrangement with the directors, Hood has taken his departure for home.