

The Southern League.

LUTON v. WEST HAM

Played at Luton on Saturday. Result:—

Luton	4 goals.
West Ham	nil.

The teams were as follow:—

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

West Ham—Griffiths; Eccles and Fair; Bigden, Moate, and Blythe; Miecznikowski, Bush, Evans, Wallace, and Barnes.

Referee, Mr. A. B. Vickers (London).

Almost perfect weather favoured the last of Luton's Southern League fixtures, but there was quite an end-of-the-season attendance, the spectators numbering very few over a couple of thousand. A fairly good breeze was blowing, and Luton winning the toss, took what advantages there were in this way, but they were not great.

A few weeks ago, when the homesters visited Canning Town, they received a somewhat unexpected drubbing to the tune of four goals to one, and on Saturday they were no doubt bent on getting some of their own back. They certainly started in very businesslike fashion, and it was not long before Allsopp got a chance of putting in what might have been a very dangerous centre, as the other forwards were well placed, but he shot instead, and the ball went behind.

A moment later, however, Luton were again in the vicinity of the Hammers' goal, and Allsopp, receiving from Moody, scored with a magnificent shot, which the wind carried just inside the top left-hand corner of the goal. Unfortunately for the visitors, Griffiths, in trying to get at the ball, struck the post with such force as to badly cut his hand, and he had to retire to have the injury attended to. Eccles undertook the duties of custodian, and got through them very creditably indeed.

The visitors made a brief incursion, but were driven back, and Davidson succeeded in getting clear. He, however, tried a long shot, and the ball hit the bar. Davidson missed the rebound, but Gall was near at hand and scored the second goal with a very smart shot.

After this, Luton were greatly nonplussed by the offside rule. The Hammers naturally resorted to the one-back game, and the home forwards could not accommodate themselves to it at all. Why forwards should be so utterly unable to adapt themselves to a situation of this kind is one of the things which passes the ordinary man's comprehension. The rule lays it down plainly enough that a man cannot be offside so long as he was behind the ball when it was last played, and, bearing this in mind, nothing should be easier than to score against the one-back game.

The forward in possession is tackled by the solitary back and passes the ball. If the other forwards in attendance keep behind until the pass has been made, they have a clear run for goal, but nineteen times out of twenty they get in advance of the man in possession, and of course when the ball comes to them the whistle promptly sounds for offside.

It was so on Saturday; and when the men were pulled up, some of the spectators yelled at the referee, as though he were the one to blame. For the most part Luton acted on the aggressive without getting anything better than an offside goal, and then the visitors got away, and Lindsay headed behind from a shot by Bush. The corner kick led to a scrimmage, but eventually Frail fisted away.

stood away. Soon afterwards, Griffiths came on again with a bandaged hand and played at right back, Eccles continuing in goal. From now to the interval Luton had much the better of the exchanges, and Davidson had several splendid openings, but apparently he did not care to try his luck in the shooting department, and when he passed the Hammers managed to clear. Evans, for the visitors, threatened danger on several occasions, and Frail had to give a corner to Barnes, but when half-time arrived the score remained unaltered.

When play was resumed, matters for a time became more interesting, both sides attacking in turn. Very fine shots by Bob Hawkes at the one end and Barnes at the other were the outstanding features hereabouts, but at last something more tangible came as the result of an effort by Davidson, who got away more or less on his own and finished up by registering a third goal.

The fourth point was some time in coming. Once Gall centred right along the goal-line, giving Moody the easiest chance imaginable, but the inside-left shot desperately hard and ridiculously wide. Later on Moody sent in a grand shot, which was well disposed of by Eccles, but a few minutes afterwards the custodian failed in a gallant attempt to clear a hot one from Gall, and Davidson put through.

West Ham certainly justified their reputation on this occasion as being a very erratic team, for on Saturday's form Luton would beat them ninety-nine times out of a hundred. The defence, particularly, was very rocky. Eccles, however, was not in any way to blame, for he performed in goal as if to the manner born. Griffiths also played very well at back. In the attack the centre-forward and left wing were most prominent.

As to the homesters, there was little fault to be found in any direction, except, as I have said, at one period of the game, when, had they played with their heads as well as with their feet, they might have much improved their record. But taken altogether, they played a good winning game, and perhaps the only one who need be specially mentioned is Gall, whose display at outside-right was as good as anything we have seen there for some time.

By their victory on Saturday, Luton were elevated to a more respectable position on the League table and a glance at their record shows that if they had only had a smart centre-forward all through the season they might have given some of the crack teams a shaking in the running for the championship of the League.

Really, it is quite startling to find that since the appearance of Davidson in the Luton ranks they have scored in eight Southern League matches no fewer than 21 goals, or an average of nearly three goals a match, whereas the first 22 games yielded an average of only one goal apiece, or a total of 22.

The moral of this for the directors, in fixing up the team for next season, is obvious—don't forget the centre-forward.

There were three other Southern League matches on Saturday, and the result in one was quite a surprise, Watford going to Portsmouth and making a draw at one goal all. The following is the League table up to date:—

	Goals.						
	Plyd.	Wn.	Lt.	Dn.	For.	Agst.	Pts.
Southampton	30	20	2	8	88	20	48
Reading.....	30	19	4	7	72	30	45
Portsmouth	30	17	6	7	89	82	41
Tottenham Hotspur	29	14	8	7	47	30	35
Bristol Rovers.....	30	13	9	8	46	34	31
New Brompton	28	10	8	10	85	34	30
Northampton	30	12	12	6	89	48	30
Millwall.....	28	13	13	2	50	36	23
West Ham United ..	29	9	10	10	34	47	28
Queen's Pk. Rangers	30	11	13	6	34	42	23
Luton Town.....	30	10	13	7	43	44	27
Swindon Town.....	29	10	12	7	88	45	27
Hettinger	29	7	11	11	32	40	25
Wellingborough.....	29	10	16	3	85	56	23
Watford	29	6	19	4	84	81	16
Brentford.....	30	2	27	1	16	81	5

At one time it was thought not beyond the bounds of possibility that Luton might figure in the test matches, but happily they have risen to a fairly respectable position on the table. Our friends at Watford, however, have not been so fortunate, and next Monday they are to play Brighton and Hove Albion on a London ground in order to decide which shall compete in the first division of the Southern League next season.

McEwen seems to have had a very large share in Bury's great success in the Cup final at the Crystal Palace on Saturday. Most of the reports speak of him as having been the best back on the field.