

SPORTS AND PASTIMES.

[BY "SPECTATOR".]

FOOTBALL.

THE SAINTS' NARROW ESCAPE.

LUTON SHOULD HAVE WON.

FINE PLAY BY THE VISITORS.

The visit of Luton on Saturday to Southampton was looked upon as a "snip" for the home side, but in the end the Saints had a narrow escape from defeat. On Saturday most, if not all, of the London papers tipped Southampton to win, but if anything that pre-
saged a win possibly for Luton, for in judging the Luton team the writers in the "dailies" always give the winners on the wrong side. The team went down determined to do their very best. The sides turned out as follows:—

Southampton: Clawley; Robertson and Molyneux; Meston, Bowman and Lee; Evans, Wood, Harrison, Fraser and Turner. *Luton*: Thompson; Bennett and McEwen; F. Hawkes, White and R. Hawkes; Durrant, Eaton, McKee, Storey and Allsopp.

Luton having won the toss, five minutes before the advertised time Harrison started. White at once got possession, and set his forwards going but Molyneux repulsed them with a huge punt. The check was only momentarily, Eaton and Durrant taking the ball well down, and the latter hitting the side of the net. Luton still pursued aggressive tactics, and despite energetic attempts by Bowman and Lee, maintained a footing in the home territory, from whence they were eventually ejected by Harrison robbing McKee. The young centre set his colleagues in motion, and the ball returned to him.

Getting his head to it, he beat McEwen, but found Thompson in possession before he could overtake the sphere. Fraser once or twice got away, only to see his passes intercepted, and Evans essayed a burst, but with a splendid screw volley McEwen checked him. Then Turner showed a clean pair of heels to Bennett, but hit the side of the net. The visitors were playing in a manner that did not put the home crowd at their ease, and it was a relief to them when Fraser and Turner made a pretty advance. The latter's centre gave a chance to both Wood and Harrison. The skipper allowed his junior to try his luck, without result, the ball rolling away from his foot and preventing him shooting before Bennett rushed back and hustled him off.

At the other end Robertson was deservedly applauded for cleverly tackling McKee, and then, from a judicious pass by Lee, Evans secured and put into the goalmouth. Fraser was just a second too late to take it as it passed outside. The game proceeded in ding-dong fashion and was interesting if only for its evenness. Allsopp tried his hand with a long range shot, and only missed by a few feet, while a moment later Clawley handled from Durrant.

For the next few minutes the proceedings resolved themselves in a duel between the respective vanguard with the forwards ready to pounce on the ball in flight. Storey succeeded in achieving this object, but Meston skilfully dispossessed him. The Saints have now settled down in something like their proper form and their passing was characterised by judicious calculation, but at a critical moment their scheme went "agley," mainly through the activity and alertness of the visitors' defence, in which McEwen was the shining light.

Wood made a brilliant attempt to break through the Luton lines, putting in a left foot shot that shook the post supporting the net. This incident sharpened the Saints, and several rushes were made at Thompson's charge, in one of which an exciting scrimmage took place on the verge of the line, but Thompson was punched away. However, the home forwards were not to be denied. There was a sharp contest in the Luton quarters, which eventuated in Harrison breaking clear and ramming in a splendid shot. The Saints then secured the lead after 26 minutes' play.

Luton transferred play into home territory, where Storey had hard lines in not converting a centre, the ball hitting the crossbar and bouncing over. It seemed so fitting that the same player should score the goal that fell to Luton directly after. It was obtained in a manner up in the vicinity of the home citadel, Clawley diving for the ball and missing it. Then Storey had an opportunity, and could not help netting. When hostilities were recommenced Luton displayed a keen desire for further points, but Molyneux barred their progress and was well supported by Lee. The pressure on the home backs was not of long duration, as Fraser and Turner advanced in promising style, and caused a reaction of Luton players to the protection of their goal. Turner worked close in, and then put the ball for someone else to shoot, but Bennett intercepted.

Just on half time the home goal had two very narrow escapes. Profiting by a mistake on the part of the Saints' backs, McKee ran through, and when it seemed as if he was certain to score, an unexpected happened, and the ball hit the crossbar and immediately following Durrant skimmed that portion of the structure with a cross-shot. The Saints were therefore, were fortunate not to be in arrears at half time, when the score was:

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When the second half opened the visitors made headway straight away, and Robertson headed away from Durrant. But the Light Blues returned, Eaton shooting, and Clawley clearing. This state of affairs did not please the Saints, who took prompt measures to alter them, but while they raised the pressure they failed to make any impression on the Luton defence. A lofty kick by Robertson produced a wild mix up just in front of the Luton charge, the kicking and charging being quite indiscriminate, and it was small wonder that one or two came out of the fray bleeding and limping.

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The injuries were not serious, and as for the result of all the energy expended in the charge of the Saints' vanguard it was nil. Wood had the final shot, and sent wide. But they continued to peg away, every one of the quintette going all out, but they could not work together, the Light Blues giving them no chance to combine. A sparkling effort was made, however, by Turner and Fraser, backed up by Wood, which enabled Fraser to lay on the target, but Thompson saved the shot. Hereabouts Luton were strictly on the defensive, and demonstrated that in this department of the play they were exceedingly well served.

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Try as they would Southampton could not break down that living barrier that guarded the goal, and eventually they retreated, beaten for the time. Then Luton progressed, but were checked time and again by Molyneux's brilliant work. Harrison led another forward movement, and when faced by McEwen passed to Evans at the right moment, and the latter forced a corner, which was abortive, Harrison making a desperate attempt to score, and being winded in doing so. Just after a free kick was given against McEwen for tripping. Robertson shot for goal, and Thompson showed himself to be thoroughly conversant with the new rule. He caught the ball, which was shaping for the corner of the net, and kicked away. It was returned, and went to Joe Turner, who ineffectually attempted to head a score.

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The crowd thinking he had succeeded gave vent to exultant shouts, but they were too previous; the ball had gone the wrong side of the net. Harry Wood, who was untiring, robbed R. Hawkes very neatly, and got the ball away to Harrison, who led the Saints to the advance. He transferred to Fraser, who, in turn, punted to Turner, and the latter sent on the top of the net.

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Evans forcing a corner, Harrison headed into Thompson's hands, and as the custodian was clearing Lee banged him into the net, knocking him out. The crowd were getting impatient and clamoured for the winning goal, which the home team tried to get to the best of their ability, but the Luton backs were too good for them, although the latter had all their own work to keep their citadel intact. Southampton literally bombarded the goal, without achieving any success for the time. Luton woke up after a period, but could not get beyond Robertson and Molyneux, both of whom were very successful in tackling. With five minutes to go Southampton made a final effort, and Lee hit the post from a free kick. This was the nearest the home team got to scoring, and "time" was soon afterwards called with the score:

the score :
SOUTHAMPTON, 1 ; LUTON, 1.

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The Southampton *Echo* to which I am indebted for the above excellent report of the game, introduces the match with an appreciation of the Luton players in the course of which it says—: "Latterly the Saints have generally won at the Dell, and a repetition of their victory was expected, despite the inclusion among the 'Strawplaiters' of such notable players as Thompson, McEwen, R. Hawkes, and F. Hawkes. The two first-named are ex-Bury players, who have impressed upon the Southern champions the full measure of their abilities. It was Thompson who kept goal for the "Shakers" against Southampton at the Crystal Palace, while McEwen played left back for the First Leaguers when the Saints visited Bury, and was also one of the side that overwhelmed Derby County in the English Cup final last season.

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"On the latter occasion McEwen was in dazzling form, and the whole of the Press showered encomiums upon him. Though small, he is a magnificent back. It will thus be seen that both men possess English Cup medals. Another Luton player of whom the Saints, including Harry Wood, have a high opinion is R. Hawkes. He is credited with being one of the best left half-backs in the Southern League. The four men alluded to are the best known of the 'Strawplaiters' but the other players are an able lot, and Southampton had nothing to throw away."

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The following was contributed to the *Star* by "The Friar" of Southampton:—To-day saw the opening of the home season against Luton. Our friends have had an eventful history since we first knew them, and have kept their end up in good fashion. They will have the benefit this year of that dear old opponent of ours, McEwen, who returns to the fold from Bury, and of whose gentleness and lamblike qualities the old-time players tell such pleasant tales. We hope to help Luton gently to-day over one of their very worst stiles, but the Midlanders know well that our home folks will expect of our side that we should open with a win, otherwise we should be only too pleased to oblige.