

SPORTS AND PASTIMES.

[BY "SPECTATOR"]

FOOTBALL.

LUTON DRAW WITH FULHAM.

HARD LUCK AGAIN.

Fulham, the club which did so well in the Southern League Second Division, and have started this season with such promise, afforded Luton the first home league match, and there was a large attendance of some 4,000 spectators on the Dunstable-road enclosure on Saturday, the gate receipts, which must have gladdened the hearts of the directors, amounting to £102. Colder weather has set in, and Saturday proved an excellent day for football, though the sun shone brilliantly, and the spectators on the grand stand sheltered from the wind, but exposed to the excitement of a stubbornly contested game, might even have been pardoned had they thought it was a trifle warm for the time of the year. Fulham were out early, and caused quite a sensation with their stockings, which were of a design seldom met with on the football field. No sober black or blue for Fulham, but black and white alternating.

The following is the way the teams faced each other at the call of the referee, Qr.-mr.-Sergt. Barrow (of Chatham):

LUTON.

Thompson

Bennett

McEwen

F. Hawkes

White

R. Hawkes

Durrant Eaton McKee Storey Allsopp.

O

Lawrence May Meade Hunt Soar

Robotham

Hamilton

Green

Turner

Orr

Fryer

FULHAM.

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"Mac" won the toss, and Fulham kicked off from the Bury Park end and towards the railway line. Luton made the first attack, greatly to the delight of the local crowd, and McKee tried to make the acquaintance of Fryer, but the defence was too alert, and Orr returned the sphere to the right wing, who commenced at once to make for the direction of the Luton captain, but R. Hawkes nipped in and returned the ball and cleared well. Play ruled on this side of the field, and Hawkes lost the ball through trying to do too much. Soon the ball returned, and, after Storey had made headway, R. Hawkes just placed it outside the goal. Luton continued to have just a little the better of the game, but the Fulham backs were very safe.

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A foul against either side delayed the game for a few minutes only, and once more both sides were going for all they were worth. Fryer was charged by McKee contrary to rules, and a spirited attack on the Fulham goal was necessarily spoiled. Eaton placed just by the post from a shot by R. Hawkes. McKee once more charged Fryer, and a free-kick on the goal-line resulted. Allsopp had rather hard luck in not improving one of the few chances the game offered. Then from a fine centre by Durrant, McKee headed over the bar.

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A foul against Allsopp led to a long shot at the Luton goal, but Thompson was on the alert and saved, and Soar placed over the bar. Allsopp was subsequently fouled by the Fulham half-back on his side, but though the kick was well placed White placed by the post. A similar fate met an effort of R. Hawkes', for after dodging several of his opponents he also shot wide.

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Soar in heading at the ball at the same time as R. Hawkes rammed his nose with considerable force into Bob's curly locks, with disastrous consequences to the nose. The referee and Hawkes were quick to lend their handkerchiefs, but Soar deemed it prudent to retire for a few minutes. White averted disaster just afterwards. Fulham were now having the better of the play at this point and Soar, having recovered, returned to his place. Luton had to act on the defensive for some time and the spectators were not having a very comfortable time.

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Eaton was fouled by the left back and from the kick Durrant put in a long shot, but Storey got off the top of the goal. Hamilton, who had been particularly energetic, next fouled the Luton centre and received a caution in consequence. The ball was taken to the Luton headquarters, but Storey made a run as the result of which a shot was put in at the Luton goal, but Fryer saved splendidly. Bennett, at the other end, saved when Fulham were pressing, and a free-kick was awarded the visitors for Storey charging Fryer. The Luton players had a chance of scoring, but put in a very soft shot.

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Durrant's next effort was not of the milk and water kind, and so hard was the shot that Fryer had to guide it behind. The kick was taken by Durrant, but nothing came of this, Fryer walking out and fisting away. A shot by Durrant was the only remaining feature of this half. Play up to the interval continued to be even, neither side making any impression. The half-time score stood:

LUTON, 0; FULHAM, 0.

A foul against Durrant on the re-start led to an attack on the Luton goal, and Bennett had to give a corner, which was well placed, but eventually Hunt shot over. Durrant sent in a stinger at Fryer, but the goalie fisted out to Allsopp who placed wide. Then Fryer had to fist away again. Soar transferred operations and struck the side of the net. A subsequent attack by Fulham was assisted by a foul on the part of Durrant, who robbed an opponent from behind.

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A few minutes later it looked all odds on Fulham gaining a point, but Thompson saved marvellously from close quarters. This was a very narrow escape for the homesters. The Luton men evidently understood that it was about time they made a serious effort. Orr passed back to Fryer, but the referee decided that he had caught the ball after it had gone over the line and awarded a corner. Allsopp took this but nothing came of it. White and one of the visitors got entangled in the subsequent play, and the referee awarded a free-kick. Durrant, however, who had proved a thorn in the side of the defence, made an incursion and both he and Allsopp got in shots without result.

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From the latter McKee made a dash for Fryer and it was seen that the goal-keeper was limping. He soon recovered, but no relief was afforded him by the subsequent play, for F. Hawkes placed in a beautiful shot but had the misfortune to strike the side of the net. Shots fairly rained in at the Fulham goal and once Luton got the ball in the net during a scrimmage, but off-side was given against them. Luton were now going great guns and the excitement was intense.

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The crowd yelled for the encouragement of the home players, who worked like demons. Allsopp centred, but Durrant placed well over the bar. I have seen Durrant score from these passes, but he failed at this particular one. Corner followed corner and shot followed shot, but Fryer saved everything. The ball on one occasion rolled by the post and there was a loud shout of "goal" but it was not one. Corners galore fell to the home side. Fryer when hard pressed as indeed he was for a quarter of an hour purposely gave corners preferably on Durrant's side.

The reason was not far to seek. Durrant placed them so beautifully, right under the bar, time after time, and Fryer only had to move a few inches and punch away. It was a very convenient arrangement for Fryer. Once a foul was given for Luton and R. Hawkes took the kick very disappointedly. Corners again fell to the lot of Luton but none were improved upon, and the end came with a blank score-sheet:—

LUTON, 0 ; FULHAM, 0.

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The Fulham directors are to be congratulated on the talent got together. The club has been doing well in the Southern League considering all things and they will not be found at the end of the season grasping the wooden spoon unless the players have some very bad luck. In Fryer they have a grand goalkeeper and Orr has a very steady and safe way of playing. Hamilton was inclined to be rough, but after the caution he did better. Soar was the best of the forwards. At the same time that I mention their names I should like to add that the other men are a very capable lot.

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Luton had hard luck on many occasions. It was very tantalising to see corner after corner go unconverted. The fact is Durrant placed the ball—this is only my opinion, of course—too near the bar, and Allsopp kicked too hard. The Luton forwards never got into the real passing game, and the shooting now and again was poor. The half-backs were sound, and the backs ever reliable. Thompson had nothing to do in comparison with Fryer, and that shot in the second half close in he did well to save. The referee was as fair as any we have had on the Luton ground, and he may be certain of a welcome the next time he steps into the Luton arena.

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One of the weak spots in the forward play was in the matter of taking free-kicks. The Fulham defenders ranged themselves, with the exception of one back and a goalkeeper, in a line across the ground. They always gave these two players plenty of latitude, with the result that there was always a big gap between this living line and the goal line. All that the forwards have to do is to stop nearer their own goal-line—or between the living line, and their own goalkeeper—and as soon as the ball is kicked off get the other side, pounce on the ball and get it into the net. There need be no fear of off-side, for at the time the ball was last played there were more than three of the opposing players between them and the goal-line. In practice the trick is exceedingly simple, and it is a surprise that it does not “come off” oftener.

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The *Football Star* on Saturday evening gave the certificate of merit to the Luton F.C. for having accomplished, in the opinion of "Rover," the best performance of the week by drawing with Southampton. "It will be noticed," says the paper in question, "that *The Football Star* Cup is again being competed for by the leading clubs in the South. This week Luton gained the certificate by their splendid struggle at Southampton. It was undoubtedly the best performance of the week. Next to this perhaps was the wonderful victory of the new Reading team over Portsmouth. The drawn game of Bristol City at Manchester made a very respectable third best performance of the week.

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"Throughout the whole of last season Southampton lost only four points in Southern League matches at the Dell. They have already dropped one in their first match. In 1902-3 Southampton drew with Portsmouth, lost to the Tottenham Hotspur, and drew with Kettering. Now they have drawn with Luton, who were defeated in the corresponding match by 2 goals to 0.

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"While we feel sorry for Southampton we feel glad for Luton and for the South generally. We don't want matches to be foregone conclusions. We welcome the sign of equalisation. Let us have Socialism in football. Let everybody be equals—as far as possible. It is possible that latter in the season Southampton will be too good for Luton, but a championship is won, not in a brief period, but in a whole season."

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"The Friar" on Saturday wrote:—"Now let me congratulate Luton, who were full value for the point they won. It was a curious game. Had Luton put on a couple of goals, in addition, between the time they equalised and the interval, we couldn't have growled a bit. Had our side been credited with a couple more after the change over Luton would not have been hard done by. So perhaps a draw was not a bad ending. My private opinion of the Luton team is that it is a stronger one than last season's. Their forwards show life and go, their halves, and especially Hawkes, are class, and behind they have three good men. Honestly, I think our side in the end will prove itself of stronger class than Luton, but there was on Saturday a little stiffness about the working, and perhaps a little over confidence."

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A Lutonian at Southampton sends me the following:—"Luton team as seen at the Dell last Saturday by an old Lutonian were beyond expectations as it was freely thought the Saints were going to repeat their old form and win comfortably. Instead of that they were outplayed, and only luck prevented the boys in blue snatching a victory. The game in the first half was one of the best, and some of the old time spirit existed between players. All the forwards were well together, and were backed up by smart and well-balanced half-backs and backs. McKwen's play was the chief feature of the game, and with good luck and good gates on Dunstable road each game Luton should finish prominently in the Southern League and get a glimpse of the Cup. As an admirer of the old team and boys in blue I wish them success through the season 1903-4."

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The football edition of the *Echo* had a very amusing cartoon on its first page drawn by the clever "Gee," editor of that journal.

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