

The Southern League.

LUTON v. FULHAM.

Played at Luton on Saturday. Result:—

Luton nil.

Fulham nil.

The teams were as follow:—

Luton—Thompson; Bennett and McEwen; F. Hawkes, White, and R. Hawkes; Durrant, Eaton, McKee, Storey, and Allsopp.

Fulham—Fryer; Orr and Turner; Green, Hamilton, and Robotham; Soar, Hunt, Meade, May, and Lawrence.

Referee, Sergt. Barrow (Chatham); linesmen, Messrs. S. J. Brightwell (Rushden), and G. Brookman (Bristol).

It looked very much like the good old times to see a crowd of four or five thousand people on the Dunstable-road ground, and the attendance and the enthusiasm of Saturday show well enough that if Luton only meet with a reasonable amount of success from a playing point of view, the financial support will not be lacking. Of course, we cannot hope to vie with the London Clubs in the matter of public patronage—with Fulham, for instance, who can command a gate of ten or fifteen thousand—but still we shall be able to get along comfortably in our own modest way.

It is a little unfortunate, perhaps, that we have some of our stiffest matches to start with. Southampton was a pretty big handful at the outset. Fulham are likely to be among the top sawyers, and then within the next week we have to meet Millwall and West Ham away and Queen's Park Rangers at home. If we average a point each from these matches we shall do remarkably well, and if we do less than this, there will be no reason to get disheartened.

Still, I have great expectations, and if the form shown in the first half on Saturday was not as brilliant as we had hoped to see, it was not because the talent was wanting, but because it was not turned to the best account. The fact of it is, there was too great an ambition to score on the part of the halfbacks and the outside forwards, and the consequence was that the inside men rushed up to goal repeatedly, only to find that no call was made upon their services.

Now, this won't do. Generally speaking, the men to do the scoring are the inside forwards, and the work should not unnecessarily be taken out of their hands. It was particularly foolish to try so many long shots on this occasion, seeing that there was a giant in goal, able to get to any corner of it if the time were given him. This criticism, of course, applies more especially to the first half; in the second portion of the game there was a vast improvement.

Play commenced punctually at half-past three. Luton were the first to get away, but an attack by the visitors was the more dangerous, Hunt managing to survive the attentions of McEwen, but Bennett stepped in, and Mac returning to the rescue got the ball out to Bob Hawkes, who speedily transferred to the other end. Storey almost got through, and then the redoubtable Bob sent wide.

From a throw-in, Meade received and got in a lovely shot at the Luton goal, but Thompson smartly cleared, and then there was a spell of vigorous work in the vicinity of the Fulham citadel, a centre by Durrant at length enabling McKee to get very near the mark with a header. A foul against Allsopp created a diversion in favour of the visitors, but Luton returned to the attack, and had a little more judgment been displayed in the shooting department, the efforts should have met with success.

Following upon a free kick given by Fred Hawkes, Fulham secured a couple of corners, and eventually Soar sent in a very likely-looking shot which Thompson fisted away from just under the bar. At this time, the Luton defence became a little bit rocky, and the spectators had a few anxious moments. When Luton at last succeeded in beating off their opponents, Hamilton was cautioned for a foul on McKee. Fulham cleared from Bennett's kick, but the homesters were soon acting on the aggressive again, and Storey and Bob Hawkes both made efforts which Fryer successfully dealt with.

Durrant next got in a capital centre, but it was neutralised by offside against the inside men, who cultivated too close an acquaintance with the custodian. Durrant afterwards tried a shot on his own, and a very good one it was, Fryer giving a corner by putting the ball round the post. Durrant placed, but Fulham cleared, and after they had frustrated another assault, the whistle sounded for half-time.

So far, there had been very little in it, one side showing to as much advantage as the other, and the second half did not open very auspiciously for the home side. Durrant was pulled up for a foul, and from the free kick, Bennett dashed in to clear instead of leaving it to Thompson, and gave a corner. Luton cleared from this, and went up the field in capital style, Durrant winding up with a shot to which Fryer conceded a corner. Durrant placed beautifully, and when Fryer fisted away, Allsopp shot just over the bar.

Fulham retaliated, and Soar getting the ball to himself, put it across the mouth of the Luton goal, where Lawrence secured and let drive with tremendous force. A goal seemed absolutely certain, and when it was seen that Thompson had brought off a splendid save the applause which greeted him was loud and long. It was undoubtedly the best shot of the match and the best save too.

After this the visitors, practically speaking, never had another lock in. Several free kicks placed Luton well on the aggressive, and then they went at it hammer and tongs, keeping the Fulham defenders going for all they were worth, kicking here and kicking there—anywhere as long as it was away from goal. A corner-kick was rather weakly taken by Allsopp, and not improved upon, but presently Durrant had a glorious chance, and caused the spectators to groan in anguish by shooting terribly wide.

Storey next tried a shot, and while Fryer had the ball in his hands McKee threw himself head foremost at the giant custodian, causing that functionary to get rid of the ball with an alacrity which was rather amusing. Allsopp had a grand opening for a centre, the other men being just ready to take it, but he preferred to shoot, and sent over the bar.

Once the visitors got away, and a little mix-up between the Luton backs let in Soar, who forced a corner, but the play was immediately taken on to Fulham territory again, and Fred Hawkes put in a grand shot, which just missed the upright. Durrant next got in a nice dropping shot, and the three inside men managed to scrimmage the ball into the net, but were given offside.

A little later, Durrant had another opening from a centre by Allsopp, but shot high over. Luton kept pegging away, however, and the amount of spirit they put into the attack may be judged from the fact that the defenders had to concede them no fewer than eleven corners, most of which were admirably placed by Durrant. Had that player judged his shots as well as his corner-kicks, Luton would easily have obtained the lead.

Several of the corners were given by Fryer himself, who was pretty severely tested, and once Luton did manage to score, but had the point disallowed for offside. Sergt. Barrow may have been correct in his decision, but it was at least open to doubt. Allsopp had taken the ball well up into the corner and put across to Durrant, who was also well up, and when the latter returned to the mouth of goal, McKee shot it into the net. It was McKee who was given offside, and as I say, it did not appear to me that the centre-forward was at all in advance of the wing men.

However, the goal was not given, and Luton had to be content with a draw. Fulham ought to be more than content; they ought to thank their lucky stars that they escaped defeat. Nevertheless, they are a rattling good side, and should make a name for themselves. But a team with five First League players amongst them ought to be able to make a decent show, especially as the other men in the eleven have also been very carefully selected. Fryer, of course, is a man with a great reputation as a goalkeeper, but on Saturday's form I should certainly prefer Thompson. The old Derby County man made no mistakes, but all the same, he did not seem to possess that smartness which is so characteristic of Thompson. The latter strikes me as being the very best custodian Luton ever had.

Fulham's backs also are a strong, energetic, and reliable pair, Hamilton makes a very fine show at centre-half, and Soar is a real gem on the outside-right. With good management, Fulham ought to go far.

With regard to the home team, Thompson was never fully tested except with the one shot of which mention has been made, but there was an ease and coolness about his movements always which inspired the greatest confidence. It took McEwen a little time to settle down, but when he did he played a very clever game, and a similar state of affairs prevailed in the case of Bennett. Of the half-backs, Bob Hawkes was the shining light, playing a brilliant game all through, though it might be better if he sometimes resisted the temptation to indulge his really wonderful talent for dribbling. White was a lot below par in the first half, but did himself justice in the second, and Fred Hawkes gave a very creditable display.

The forwards were a little disappointing, though I attribute their want of success very much to the cause set out at the beginning of these notes. Storey was not up to the form previously shown, but I think McKee and Eaton did the best they could with the chances that came their way. The outside men worked well, but not always with the best of judgment. Allsopp might profitably do a little practice in corner-kicking, as he almost invariably placed his corners behind both forwards and half-backs.

The gate at Saturday's match on Saturday amounted to £102. The corresponding match last season was with New Brompton, and the gate then realised £65, so that the directors may congratulate themselves that they are on the up grade. With a few wins during the next few weeks, a successful season seems to be assured.

The first team will be engaged at Millwall on