

Football Notes and News.

BY "GRASSHOPPER."

LUTON v. HITCHIN.

Those who visited the Bury Park Ground on Saturday afternoon received rather a surprise packet. Hitchin, to help them out of their financial difficulties, had agreed to journey to Luton to play off their Cup-tie, and for the whole week previous no one—certainly in Luton—troubled for a moment about the result. So sure were Luton of victory that those who prophesied claimed that Luton would win by 10 to love. Hitchin, for once, was to be annihilated. It seemed as if it was a case of "The Innocents abroad—butchered to make a Luton holiday." That was the prophecy—how different the result!

But it often times does happen that a far inferior team steals a march on a much better eleven, conscious of their prowess on the field; and Hitchin certainly sprang a surprise on Luton in Saturday's match.

In the first half the Hertfordshire boys defended the railway goal, and in the opening exchanges ably defended it, too. Then, when they suddenly assumed the aggressive, boldly worked their way, step by step, into Luton's quarters, and scored through Taylor within five minutes from the start, the majority of the spectators unconsciously put their hands up and vigorously rubbed their eyes. It was an excellent goal, and I was not at all surprised that Thompson failed to save.

Hitchin continued to play well, and the only construction one could put on the way things were shaping, was that Luton were for the moment lying low "just to take it out of the boys." Then the homesters returned to the attack, but although they repeatedly bombarded the railway goal, not a single shot found the net, the leather either going over, behind, or being successfully negotiated.

The visitors, too, pressed once or twice, and on one occasion looked very dangerous. However, nothing more was done in the first half, and when the whistle blew, Hitchin had the credit of the only goal scored.

Even on resuming, matters did not change so much, at least for a time. The fact was, the Luton men were very much off colour, whilst Hitchin, contrary to general anticipation, were as cool and troublesome as ever. Though Luton did the greater part of the pressing, and had innumerable opportunities, they failed to secure the equalising point. The second moiety had been in progress for quite ten minutes, and many began to fear that two goals were too many for Luton to get, when Turner broke away and secured Luton's first point. I heartily sympathised with those who applauded.

Still, the game straggled on. Cooper, the Hitchin custodian, saved some wonderful shots, and the visitors played a strong defensive game. It was a good while before Storey, with a creditable individual effort, put Luton first. Nothing of much consequence occurred afterwards, and Luton left the field victors—by the narrowest possible margin.

It is not always well to be sounding the praises of your own team, and I am glad to give Hitchin credit for Saturday's performance, and go so far as to sympathise with them that they did not win or at least draw.

To me it appeared that Luton took their opponents too cheaply. The home team were without McKee and Durrant, but Cox and Turner are surely good substitutes to pitch against a team like Hitchin? I did not think very much of the performance of any of our forwards, with the exception of Sammy Eaton, who certainly did work hard. Though they managed to get the goals, I did not see Storey or Turner so very active during the afternoon. The halves were also very much "off," and I was disappointed with Bob Hawkes, though I have no doubt he will soon get into form again. Little McEwen and Bennett were the only other two that appeared to be doing most of the work.

As to Hitchin, if one did not admire their style of play, one was compelled to admire their pluck and determination. They did not at all appear to feel that they had come to Luton to be eaten up, and they played, on the defensive it is true, with dogged persistence to the end. Jeakings was the most conspicuous on the field, Taylor and Payne also played a decent game, and the halves gave a good account of themselves.

The teams were as follows:—

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

Hitchin.—Cooper; Jeakings and Allen; Stimpson, Smith, and Hales; Pearce, Cannon, Barker, Payne and Taylor.