

Football.

The Southern League.

LUTON v. BRENTFORD.

Played at Luton on Saturday. Result:—

Luton 1 goal.
Brentford nil.

The teams were as follow—

Luton: Thompson; Bennett and McEwen; F. Hawkes, Holdstock, and R. Hawkes; Durrant, Eaton, McKee, Turner, and Allsopp.

Brentford: Frail; Watson and Davidson; Bilingham, Parsonage, and Cain; Atherton, Leigh, Bell, Buchanan, and Underwood.

Referee, Quartermaster-Sergt. Barrow (Chatham); linesmen, Messrs. Nash and Moucher (London).

After the excitement of the Cup-tie, the League match with Brentford fell a little bit flat, and the attendance was the smallest of any Southern League game this season. Brentford is not a name to conjure with, and despite an excellent record this season, their visit was not regarded with very great interest.

The weather, though fine, was far from favourable to football, a strong wind rendering play extremely difficult, and giving the side which had choice of ends a very great advantage. Indeed, it was very freely asserted before the game that the side which won the toss would win the game, but when it was seen that Brentford had been successful in the spin of the coin, the opinion just referred to became instantly modified.

And as a matter of fact Luton quickly showed that wind or no wind, they were not going to give anything away if they could help it. The visitors at first got away on the left, and Fred Hawkes put the stopper on, but a moment later gave a corner, which was well placed by Atherton. Holdstock cleared, and Luton going to the other end, Turner received a good pass from the centre-half and hit the post with a lovely shot. Eaton meeting the rebound, had the chance of a lifetime, but shot tamely, and Frail easily cleared.

Durrant followed on with a couple of good centres, and then from a shot from the left a desperate struggle took place right in the mouth of goal, the Luton forwards trying all they knew to get the ball in, and Frail being equally determined to keep it out. Eventually the whistle put an end to an exciting situation, and a free kick afforded Brentford very welcome relief.

The visitors immediately made their way up the field, and Thompson gave a corner. Nothing resulted, and Durrant, after a speedy bit of travelling, finished up with a good shot at the Brentford goal. Frail fisted out, and shortly afterwards was fortunate in tipping a grand shot from Turner over the bar. The corner kick was not turned to account. From another, placed by Durrant, Frail had to be very much on the alert to save from a header by Holdstock and a shot by Allsopp.

Luton at this time were having much the better of the play, the Brentford defence being severely tried. Durrant forced another corner, and from the centre Holdstock headed just by the upright, while directly afterwards Frail put behind from a capital shot by the Luton outside-right, and was obliged to do the same thing a minute later to a good attempt by Fred Hawkes.

In neither instance did anything tangible accrue, but the attention of the spectators was soon attracted by a very pretty run by the Luton forwards. The ball went out to the left, and was then returned all along the line to Eaton, who had another glorious opening, but again disappointed expectation by shooting just by the post.

The visitors made a brief response, and Thompson was called upon to make a couple of saves, the second from a splendid shot from the right wing. Luton then trundled the ball down the field, and after Durrant had placed a corner, he again met the ball and returned into the mouth of goal, where once more there was a very warm scrimmage, and once more the whistle sounded for a free kick.

Presently Durrant took a fine pass from Holdstock and swung the ball across, Allsopp heading in, but Frail apparently had reserved one of his best displays for the edification of his old friends, and he kept his goal intact. The visitors after this began to have a larger share of the game, and from a well-placed corner by Atherton, Thompson cleared well.

Brentford, however, obtained another corner, and Underwood having placed, Thompson appeared to be beaten in the melee which ensued, but someone, I could not see who it was, effected an almost miraculous clearance. Luton were on the point of getting away, when McKee was pulled up for offside, and from the free kick the visitors put the pressure on for all they were worth.

Before anything happened, however, the whistle sounded for half-time. So far Luton had been a long way the better team, having had quite three-fourths of the play, and if they could do this against the wind, the spectators asked themselves what they would do when the breeze was in their favour.

But playing against a gale takes it out of a team, no matter how good their condition may be, and I was not surprised to find that the exertions of this first forty-five minutes had taken the keen edge off the Luton play. They were never as good again. Moreover, Brentford having failed to score when the elements were in their favour, had evidently made up their minds that if they could not get a goal themselves they would at least do their level best to prevent Luton being successful.

Accordingly, in this second half they did not trouble themselves as to the niceties of the game, but went for the ball with all the dash they could muster, never troubling where it went as long as they got in their kick. The consequence was that the ball was almost as often out of play as it was in, and the game suffered in proportion.

When play was resumed, Luton were soon on the aggressive, and racing along the right Eaton sent in a fairly good shot, which Frail saved. There really ought to have been a goal that time, as the ball coming out from a crowd of players on the left gave Eaton and Durrant a clear field. Presently, Durrant sent in a good shot, and Frail, fumbling the ball, the inside men were soon on him, and the leather appeared to have gone well in goal before the custodian could get rid of it. The referee, however, was deaf to Luton's appeal.

From another centre by Durrant, Luton did get the ball through beyond a doubt, but offside nullified. The Luton attack suffered considerably during this early part of the second half, because the left wing monopolised so much of the game. "Right across" shouted McEwen again and again, but it was to no purpose, and Durrant and Eaton were left looking and longing for a job.

The winning goal came at last, however, and it was from a corner. Allsopp placed, and was admonished by the skipper to allow for the wind. He judged it very nicely, and Brentford, in clearing, sent the ball out to Fred Hawkes, who put in a beauty, to which McKee gave the finishing touch.

Luton continued to press, and from a corner, placed by Durrant, Allsopp had a good try, but the ball rebounded off Watson, who was lucky enough to get in the way. Holdstock next showed up with a couple of good shots, the second passing just over the bar, and then McKee gave Durrant a beautiful pass, but the outside right dallied too long with his shot, and it never got home.

To show how the fight was going at this time, it is only necessary to say that Bennett got in two capital shots, to one of which Frail gave a corner. This, like several others, proved to be fruitless, and towards the finish, Brentford made two or three determined attacks upon the Luton goal, and Thompson had one extremely dangerous shot to deal with.

Nothing further was scored, and the game ended in a win for the homesters as stated. The game was nothing like so good as that of the previous week, but the wind was largely responsible for the falling off. In the early part of the proceedings, Luton gave a remarkably good display, and had it not been for Frail's fine work between the sticks, there would have been more than one goal to our credit at the finish.

I should say that during the whole time he was with us last year, Frail never gave so fine an exhibition as he did on Saturday. He was tested by all manner of shots, he several times waged a single-handed battle against all comers, and he came out of the ordeal exceedingly well.

Brentford are certainly a much stronger lot than last year, and after seeing them we cannot be surprised at their greatly-improved position. When they came on Saturday they had twelve points for eleven games, a state of affairs which in past seasons Luton have been glad to regard as highly satisfactory.

As to the home team, I shall reserve my remarks for Thursday, when I hope to have a word or two to say particularly with regard to the forthcoming match at Fulham.

The other League matches were interesting to Luton, but none more so than that at Swindon, where Plymouth were somewhat unexpectedly beaten by two goals to nil. This greatly improves Luton's chances of championship honours, for they are now a point in front of these dangerous rivals, and have the further advantage of a game in hand.

Reading made a draw at Kensal Rise with the Queen's Park Rangers, and though the Biscuiters still head the League, they are only two points above Luton, and have played three more games. Millwall and Southampton easily beat Wellingborough and Brighton respectively. Tottenham, who are the next League Club to visit Luton, showed evidence of improved form by beating West Ham, and Fulham, it is interesting to note, were vanquished on their own ground by Bristol Rovers.

The following is the League table up to date:

	Goals						
	Plyd.	Wn.	Lt.	Dn.	For.	Agst.	P.
Reading	13	6	2	5	22	15	17
Millwall	12	7	3	2	29	15	16
Southampton.....	13	6	3	4	29	17	16
Luton Town	10	5	0	5	10	5	15
Portsmouth	10	7	2	1	17	9	15
Plymouth Arvyde.....	11	6	3	2	17	8	14
Bristol Rovers	11	6	3	2	20	11	14
Brentford	12	5	5	2	12	14	12
Queen's Park Rangers...	11	4	4	3	15	12	11
Tottenham Hotspur.....	11	3	4	4	9	12	10
Wellingborough	9	4	4	1	11	11	9
Fulham	11	2	4	5	9	10	9
Swindon Town	11	2	4	5	10	14	9
Brighton and Hove	11	3	6	2	16	23	8
Kettering	11	3	7	1	11	27	7
West Ham United	10	2	6	2	12	18	6
Northampton.....	11	2	7	2	13	26	6
New Brompton.....	12	1	7	4	5	20	6

The Kettering Club appears to be in financial difficulties. The "Northampton Reporter" of the 14th inst., stated that in the town itself "the report has been pretty general during the week that unless matters improve considerably, there is a likelihood of the withdrawal of the Club from the Southern League. Efforts have been made during the week to transfer Leigh to Wellingborough, but suitable terms could not be arranged, and the proposal fell through. (A special effort was made to fulfil the engagement at Brighton." A correspondent of the "Football Star" says, however, that the fixture list will be faithfully gone through.

In view of the approaching Cup-tie, much anxiety is evinced in various quarters as to the best means of reaching the Fulham ground. One way is to go from King's Cross Metropolitan to Putney Bridge (the station nearest the ground), changing at either Gloucester-road or Kelsington High-street. Another way is to book from King's Cross to Hammersmith, which may be reached without changing. In the latter case there will be a quarter-of-an-hour's walk or a penny 'bus ride to Putney Bridge.

I am also informed that arrangements may be made with the London General Omnibus Company for 'buses from King's Cross to the accommodates 26 persons. Two clear days' accommodates 26 persons. Two clear day's notice, however, must be given to the Company.

Messrs. Sale and Co. have a number of tickets for stand and ring seats for disposal. For the stand, including admission, the price is 2s., and for the ring 1s. 6d. These tickets are numbered, and must be purchased on or before Friday afternoon.

Some notes in the "Watford Observer," by "Free Lance" go far to show how keen was the disappointment caused by the result of the Cup-tie. The writer says:—

"All the consolation Watford got from their Cup-tie with Luton was the half of a £106 gate. The match was lost by 4—1, and once more Watford was the under dog. Really, it is about time we scratched when drawn in the Bedfordshire town, and allowed the Straw-plasters a walk-over. Perhaps our turn will come, but it is a terribly long time on the way.

"All along I had been pretty certain that the task was a greater one than Watford could accomplish, but it was no part of my role to play Cassandra to the magnificent enthusiasm which prevailed. Only once did I see any hope, and that was when it was reported that McEwen was unfit, and the Luton half line would in consequence have to be broken up to allow White to partner Bennett.

"It does one good to note the spirit of Watford's followers, who could not have numbered less than 1,500. They travelled, about two hundred with the team, and the rest in two special trains, which, as usual, crawled up the Dunstable cutting, the engines snorting and labouring like giants in pain. A merry crew they—I mean the supporters—were in the morning. A downcast and dispirited crowd they returned in the evening.

"The alteration in the Luton team to which I have referred ought to have enabled Watford to win. But unfortunately from the visitors' point of view, the absence of the home captain did not weaken his side. Holdstock, whose football career was said to be at an end three or four years ago, when he met with an accident to his leg, played grandly at centre half, and Waite was in champion form at back.

"The weather was beautifully bright when the game started, but rain fell heavily just before the interval, and in the second half the ground became slippery and heavy. I think this fact had a lot to do with the thrashing Watford received. Used to a dry, fast ground, they floundered in the mud and tired dreadfully. Twenty minutes before the finish all but three of Watford's team were dead tired, and hardly able to raise a trot.

"There are a good many riddles in football, and one is this—why are Luton always above their form when they meet Watford, and why are the Cashio road men never able to rise to the occasion in these encounters? After Saturday's game I was told that Luton's display, especially forward, was immeasurably better than anything they have previously shown this season. Some of us could, directly the draw was announced, have staked our earthly possessions that this would be the case."

Luton's victory over Brentford by one goal to nil was not quite so decisive as we had expected, but then that was not so much the fault of the home team as of the wind, which greatly interfered with the play. The surprising thing was that Luton performed so well against the wind, for it really was in the first half that they were seen to the greatest advantage, although they did not succeed in scoring.

Time after time they went down the field in brilliant style, and the Brentford goal had a number of narrow escapes. If the Lutonians could have shown the same form in the second half, when they had the breeze in their favour we should have seen something sensational, but their previous efforts had taken it out of them to a large extent, and in certain quarters there was also more zeal than judgment.

Holdstock again distinguished himself in the early part of the game, and if he tired somewhat before the finish that was not surprising in view of the prevailing conditions. It was certainly not his fault that Luton failed to score in the first half, for he was always backing up when there was an attack on the Brentford goal, and many of his passes were beautifully timed.

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Comparing Luton's play generally in the first forty-five minutes with that of the previous week, I should say there was very little falling off. Brentford were out-classed all the way round, and if the homesters had been credited with two or three goals, it would not have been more than they deserved.

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Frail's exhibition was astonishing. Last season, when he played for Luton, he was most disappointing, but on Saturday Thompeon himself could hardly have given a better show, and that is saying a great deal.

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But in the second half he had an easier time than many of us wished to see, and that was very largely the fault of the Luton left wing. Turner played a tremendously hard game, and was wonderfully clever too, but no matter how hard a man may work or how clever he may be, if he monopolises the ball too much he is not rendering his side as useful service as he might.

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Individually Turner played a great game, and was certainly the most conspicuous man among the forwards, but when he had drawn the defenders to his vicinity why did he not pass the ball out to the right wing instead of indulging in hopeless attempts to force his way through? McEwen shouted again and again for this to be done, but for the most part he shouted in vain.

Now in the Watford match our forwards kept the ball going from one to another, and no man ever kept it a moment longer than he could if there was a comrade better placed. And that was the way the goals came, and no other method of goal-getting can be followed with any amount of satisfaction.

On Saturday, with the wind where it was, and Carrant in his favourite corner—I am speaking of the second half—the ball might with advantage have been sent over there as often as possible, but instead of that the right-winger, for long stretches at a time, had to play the part of a looker-on.

I am perfectly sure that this was quite unintentional on the part of Turner, who was so eager that he was simply putting in every ounce himself without taking time to study the situation. He is a rattling good player, of that there can be no doubt, but against Watford he tempered his zeal with discretion and on Saturday he did not.

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His partner Allsopp did not reproduce his form of the previous week, but I am hoping that he was merely reserving it for Fulham. He went all out, but somehow or other his efforts failed to meet with much success. His corner-kicks, however, were again very well taken, and it was from one of these that the goal was scored.

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McKee, although not one of the most brilliant of centres, is nevertheless a very capable man, passes well, and is nearly always on the spot when there's a rush on goal. I am a little disappointed with Eaton, however, for he seems to have quite dropped out of the scoring department. As I have said before, at the beginning of the season he electrified us with his startling dashes and lightning shots, but he is nothing like so prone to indulge in that direction now.

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No fault could be found with the half-backs on Saturday. Fred Hawkes was as smart and persevering as ever, and Bob played a much-improved game. He had not been going in quite his best form, but on this occasion he gave a capital exhibition.

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The backs were indefatigable, though Mac's anxiety led him into one or two mistakes towards the finish of the game. We were all delighted to see him out again, and sincerely hope that he will have no further trouble. Bennett was in his usually good mood, and when Brentford did get on visiting terms with Thompson, they found our custodian as smart and safe as ever.

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Will not someone be good enough to put a spoke in Pompey's wheel? Swindon did Luton us good service on Saturday by taking a couple of points out of Plymouth, but it is time Portsmouth had a check placed on their career. They have played the same number of games as Luton and have the same number of points, Luton only being above them on goal average.

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Last Saturday's gate at Luton realised only £80. This is the first time it has fallen under

£100 in any Southern League match this season.

Of course, there is nothing now to be thought of by local footballers but the forthcoming Cup-tie at Fulham, and we are all extremely hopeful that yet another win may be placed to the credit of the Luton team. But the victory will not be obtained without a very severe struggle, and the men must make up their minds to play for all they are worth, and never to be particular who scores so long as the scoring is done. Fulham are in special training at Brighton, and they should therefore turn out in the very pink of condition.

Personally, I think training at home is quite as effective as training away, so long as the men do themselves justice in other respects, and fortunately this is a point upon which the Luton team are absolutely reliable.

With all due respect, I question if Fulham are anything like as strong as some of the teams we have met this season. It is true they made a pointless draw when they visited Luton early in the season, but they were extremely lucky in so doing. Bristol Rovers, whom we beat by a goal to nil, played us a much better game, and I was not at all surprised to hear that the Rovers had secured the victory at Craven Cottage last Saturday, even though Fulham started with the wind in their favour.

There are two men whom Luton have to bargain for particularly. The one is Fryer in goal, and the other is Soar, the outside-right. If McEwon and Bob Hawkes keep the latter in check—the less rope he is allowed the better—our forwards ought to be able to circumvent the old Derby man, but I should say it will have to be by combined rushes rather than by long shots.

The Luton team will be identical with that of last Saturday, but White and Storey will make the journey in case of emergency.

The "Football Star" says: "The luck of the draw is a great factor in cup-ties. It ought to be worth anything from one to three goals for the home team. Luton, who are so far undefeated, are set a severe task in being asked to beat Fulham at Craven Cottage. One point in Luton's favour is their superb defence. It is not necessary that the Bedford men should win at Fulham. A draw would serve them almost as well. The fact that Reading won at Fulham recently, is all in favour of the visitors, who, however, will require to be at their best to escape defeat. It ought to be a great match, with the chances slightly in favour of the home team."

The Fulham correspondent of the same paper is in a very hopeful mood. He remarks: "In the divisional final last year Fulham had to visit Luton, and the result was the Cottagers received their dismissal from the Cup, but this time the teams meet again in the final of the division, and the luck of the draw has fallen on Craven Cottage. Luton hold a very fine position in the Southern League, and their record for matches away from home is one to command respect, yet on form the Cottagers stand an excellent chance of figuring in the intermediate round. Earlier in the season Fulham divided S.L. points with the Bedfordshire men on their own ground, but the Cottagers are better now, and great confidence is expressed in their ability to win at Craven Cottage next Saturday."

The Fulham players, the writer adds, were to leave London on Saturday night last for a week's special training, a course similar to that adopted prior to the tie with Queen's Park Rangers.

In view of the approaching Cup-tie, much anxiety is evinced in various quarters as to the best means of reaching the Fulham ground. One way is to go from King's Cross Metropolitan to Putney Bridge (the station nearest the ground), changing at either Gloucester-road or Kensington High-street. Another way is to go from King's Cross to Hammersmith, which may be reached without changing. In the latter case there will be a quarter-of-an-hour's walk or a penny 'bus ride to Putney Bridge.

I am also informed that arrangements may be made with the London General Omnibus Company for 'buses from King's Cross to the ground, at 25s. return, or 15s. single. A 'bus accommodates 26 persons. Two clear days' notice, however, must be given to the Company.

Messrs. Sals and Co. have a number of tickets for stand and ring seats for disposal. For the stand, including admission, the price is 2s., and for the ring 1s. 6d. These tickets are numbered, and must be purchased on or before Friday afternoon.

The Midland Company are running a special excursion train to St. Pancras, leaving Luton at twelve o'clock, and arriving at St. Pancras at 12.50. Passengers may then continue the journey to the Craven Cottage ground by either of the ways suggested above.

A.M., an old Spur supporter, who resided at Tottenham for eight years, sends me the following lines, and remarks: "If I may add anything else, it is that I think the present Luton team one of the fairest and most sportsmanlike I have ever seen, and they deserve their success":—

In the front rank we see contre-forward McKee,
On the left wing are Allsopp and Turner;
With Storey, whose feet are tricky and neat,
If of form I may be a discernor.

I have seen, often time, the Spurs in their prime,
When fame and the Spurs were concurrent;
Though they may have had quite as good men
on the right,
Yet no better than Eaton and Durrant.

For the line of half-backs there are four local
bricks,

A keen pair of Hawkes ever ready
Either Holdstock or White to assist in the fight,
And the forwards to feed or to steady.

The Southern League slate is clean right up to
date,

No Club has yet written defeat on;
For McIlwen and Bennett (and Fulham may
ken it)

With Thompson know not when they're
beaten.

In reply to an inquirer, the match at Luton v. Wellingborough last year was won by Luton by 3 goals to 1. At Wellingborough Luton were defeated by 2 goals to 1.