

Football.

The English Cup.

FULHAM v. LUTON.

Played at Fulham on Saturday. Result:—

Fulham		3 goals.
Luton		1 goal.

The teams were as follow:—

Fulham—Fryer; Orr and Turner; Waterson. Gray, Robotham; Soar, Fletcher, Connor, McQueen, and Lawrence.

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

Referee, Mr. A. Milward.

Luton's long spell of good fortune met with a very sad interruption on Saturday. It originated with the weather. We had all been expecting a phenomenal gate, for the Craven Cottage ground has held many big crowds this season, and with no other match of importance in London, there seemed a strong probability on this occasion of eclipsing all records.

Unluckily, rain set in on Friday, continued all through the night, and more or less all day on Saturday, the consequence being that thousands were kept away, and, perhaps worse still, the ground was rendered in a deplorable condition, especially in the centre. Under ordinary circumstances, the Fulham pitch must be a first-rate one, but it cannot stand a heavy rain.

Still, amongst the three or four hundred Lutonians who went up to witness the match, there were not many doubters, for it was generally anticipated that Luton would be quite good enough to make a draw, if not to win outright. But "glorious uncertainty" is not the characteristic of cricket alone, and football teams often go down when least expected.

Fulham had done their level best to get ready for the fray, the men having been in training for a week at Brighton, and they were received with an outburst of applause as they stepped on to the field a few minutes before the kick-off. Luton, who followed immediately, met with an even warmer greeting, the Lutonians present making up for the smallness of their numbers by giving strong evidence of their lung power.

Another bad omen! Fryer won the toss, and set Luton to face a slight breeze. After a little give-and-take play, Fulham got down from a free kick, and Connor tried a long shot which Thompson easily disposed of. Luton at once replied, and the left back had to kick out in order to relieve the pressure, whilst from the throw-in Durrant sent behind.

A minute later, however, Durrant was responsible for a brilliant centre, and Holdstock had a fine opening, but missed his kick. This was a bit of luck for Fulham to start with, but Luton came again, and Holdstock this time sent in a splendid shot, which was well saved by Fryer. Turner, the left back, next gave a corner, and Durrant placing, Holdstock headed in, but the whistle sounded for offside against McKee.

Soon afterwards there occurred an incident which, had the referee's ruling on the point been in Luton's favour, might have made all the difference in the result of the game. McKee was going for goal, and when well within the penalty line, was charged in the back and sent full sprawl. Luton confidently appealed for a penalty, but the referee shook his head, and the game proceeded.

So far as I could see, there was no question in my mind as to the penalty having been merited, but Mr. Milward evidently regarded the charge from a different point of view. Had the penalty been given, the probability is that matters would have gone very differently, for Luton were playing much the better game. As it happened, however, Fulham having escaped at this end, had a rare slice of luck directly afterwards at the other.

A grand shot by Fred Hawkes having just topped the bar, the play was returned to mid-field, and from a free kick the homesters got into the immediate vicinity of the Luton goal. Here a momentary paralysis seemed to come over the defenders, one apparently leaving it to the other to make the clearance, and profiting by this indecision, Connor was able to net the ball in a ridiculously easy manner.

Fulham's success was, of course, received with the greatest enthusiasm by the crowd, which had now assumed much larger proportions, and the home players were also greatly encouraged. They were soon on the aggressive again, and Fletcher shot just wide. Then Luton foolishly conceded another free kick, and Orr again placing, the ball glanced off McEwen's head to the feet of Lawrence, who scored another goal with a cross shot which gave Thompson no chance.

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Two goals inside a quarter of an hour. The spectators—that is, the London portion of them—went almost wild with excitement, and something like consternation reigned in the ranks of the Luton contingent. The Luton players, however, showed no signs of discouragement, and were quickly threatening the Fulham goal. From a good centre by Allsopp, Durrant had a fine chance, but shot wide, and Turner afterwards worked his way through, and then put the wrong side of the net.

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Luton got away again through the instrumentality of McEwen, and Durrant finished up with a lovely cross shot, to which Fryer had to give a corner. Durrant placed, and when Fulham cleared, McEwen returned into the mouth of goal, but a foul against Holdstock relieved Luton next made a pretty combined run, and the ball going out to Durrant, the latter put in a beautiful shot, which Fryer just reached but could not turn aside, and the ball went spinning into the net, while the custodian, who slipped, stretched his length on the ground.

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It was now the turn of the Luton spectators to cheer, and it is needless to say that they fully rose to the occasion. After the return to the half-way line, the visitors again made the running, and Durrant put in a dangerous-looking centre, but unfortunately the other forwards were not there to take it. Then Fulham made tracks for the other end, and Thompson ran out some distance to clear. Before he could get back, a shot was put in, and there seemed nothing to prevent the ball finding its way into the net, but just in the nick of time one of the defenders got his foot to the leather and effected a clearance.

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A grand centre by Durrant was the next feature, and after Fryer had got it away, a foul against Fulham close in gave Luton another opportunity, and Bennett put in well, but again Fryer saved. A mistake by Holdstock then enabled Lawrence to get away, and from his centre Fletcher sent in a hard shot. Thompson saved in capital style, and was seen to equal advantage with another attempt from the same quarter.

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A very serious misfortune now overtook Luton, Durrant straining the muscles of his leg and being incapacitated for the rest of the game. After being attended to by the trainer, he resumed his place on the field, and continued to the end, but he was no good, being unable to run, and I think his presence did more harm than good.

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Still, Luton ought to have equalised before the interval, a beautiful centre by Allsopp giving Eaton an open goal, but to the great disappointment of us all, he headed over the bar. It certainly was most exasperating. Luton continued on the aggressive, but nothing more than a corner rewarded their efforts, and when the whistle gave the signal for half-time, Fulham were still leading by two goals to one.

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Soon after play had been resumed, Luton were attacking, and Turner looked to have a chance of getting through, but, being challenged, he left the ball and went for the man, with the result that the opportunity was lost. After a brief visit to the other end, Luton came again, and Robotham gave a corner to Turner, but nothing came of it. Soar next made a capital run, and was a little too smart for McEwen, who used his hands as a last resource, but the free kick which resulted was not turned to account.

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Soar, however, again threatened danger, and though it seemed to be a clear case of offside, he was allowed to continue, Bennett in the end

conceding a corner, which Fletcher placed behind. Luton were not shaping nearly so well now, Durrant's assistance being very much missed, and besides that they gave away free kicks with irritating prodigality, though the fouls were foolish rather than vicious.

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Sometimes, indeed, Luton were penalised when it was difficult to discover the cause, and on one occasion a foul was given against Turner for getting his leg in front of another man, though as a matter of fact, he actually captured the ball and was going off with it when the whistle sounded. Of course, different men interpret the rules in different ways, and I can only speak for myself when I say that it seemed a perfectly legitimate thing to do, and I notice from an opinion given by Mr. John Lewis on a similar piece of play that he holds the same view.

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Although Luton's efforts were not of a character to inspire great hopes, they were having more of the game than their opponents, and in resisting one of the Luton attacks, Orr was tripped by Turner and had to be carried off the field, apparently with a dislocated knee. To everybody's surprise, however, he came on again a few minutes later, apparently as sound as ever.

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Fulham now made another assault on the Luton goal, and from a free kick given by Fred Hawkes, the left back placed, and Thompson, in trying to clear, punted the ball up in the air. Bob Hawkes averted immediate danger by kicking behind, and the corner proved to be fruitless, but Fulham renewed their overtures, and the ball eventually going out to Fletcher, that player put on the third point for his side with a very fine shot.

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This was Fulham's best goal, the other two having been very soft affairs, and it made the game safe. Luton tried hard in the little time that remained, and a beautiful shot by Bob Hawkes was saved by Fryer just near the top corner of the goal. At the finish, Fulham were again on Luton territory, but there was no more scoring, and the Londoners were left rejoicing in a victory that impartial persons had scarcely expected them capable of achieving.

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Below are some of the newspaper comments on the game:—

'The "Morning Leader," in a capital account of the match, says:—It is no mean triumph for the new team representing Fulham to have gone through their divisional competition for the Football Cup. On Saturday they were confronted with the appalling task of defeating the only undefeated Club in the Southern League, a side which had drawn at Southampton, Plymouth, and West Ham, and won at Millwall, yet Fulham rose to the occasion, and, with a victory by 3—1, did credit to the stimulating climate of Brighton, where they had been installed for a week. The success was not gained with the comfort which the figures imply, for though Fulham actually scored the first two goals in less than twenty minutes, one of these was soon rubbed off, and it was not till they got the third point, midway in the second half, that they could afford to feel really safe.

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The match was a magnificent struggle, but Luton, after flattering their supporters with a distinctly good display in the first half, fell away in the second, a deterioration influenced no doubt by the consciousness of misfortune. Fulham won their victory as well as any team can desire to win, yet they must be prepared to admit the assistance of what might be called a fortuitous opportunism. Both their goals in the first half were from free kicks almost on the half-way line. The foul in the first case was against R. Hawkes, after ten minutes' play, Orr dropping the ball to within a few yards of goal for Connor to receive from Fletcher and score with evident simplicity, while about ten minutes later Holdstock offended at much the same place, and again Orr was responsible for a free kick, the outcome of which was a grand chance for Lawrence, who, standing unmarked clear of the 'scrum,' kicked straight at the far wing of the net. Goals from free kicks are not particularly satisfactory, yet in one sense these successes were deserved, for Luton were the more extravagant in illegal tactics.

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On the other hand, it was by no means a foul game, yet the whistle was going fairly regularly for technicalities. According to my notes, something like three-fifths of the free kicks were against the visitors, a condition of affairs which tended to disparage the referee in the opinion of Lutonians, but Mr. Milward's rulings were characterised by a stern decision which revealed the experienced official. Up to the time Fulham had scored their second goal, I thought Luton were the better team, and when, ten minutes later, Fryer, in dealing with a long, low side shot from Durrant, scooped the ball up into his own net, in the endeavour to concede a corner, the Fulham crowd shuddered. However, the home forwards, while at no time so well together as those on the other side, had a worrying habit of getting to goal, and on one occasion, following a brilliant piece of work by Soar, it looked any odds on the ball going through, but Thompson saved from McQueen and Fletcher.

The prospect for Luton was sadly dulled when the second half began, for it transpired that Durrant's muscles of the right thigh had "gone." The consequence was that the Luton attack became a trifle lop-sided, and there could be no question of the superiority of the home team in this half. Fulham were just that bit quicker to get to the ball that means so much, and the further they went the more did they look like winning.

Fulham won this match by their quickness and dash, plus a little help from the Fates. In a mere artistic sense Luton's football was more admirable, and if I were a Lutonian I should feel a little sorry that things worked out so badly, and a little glad that the team proved itself very little inferior to the home lot at such an enthusiastic centre as Fulham. There was not a two-goals' difference between the sides, and had Luton won, as the play went they could not have been regarded as lucky. The chief difference between them was that Fulham got the goals, and as they got them honestly they are to be warmly commended.

The Luton team worked on clever lines, and this is the game for the League. It is quite the best Luton team I have ever seen, and though not many goals have been scored, the men may be encouraged to persevere with this style. Durrant was very dangerous until he was put out of court, and of the others Turner struck me as the most effective, though McKee distributed his passes with good judgment. Holdstock, at centre-half, was hardly a success, otherwise the defence was satisfactory, and Bennett again proved himself a grand back.

The "Athletic News" says:—Although Fulham have been prolific scorers in the qualifying competition of the Football Association Cup, their Southern League record up to date does not make them out as strong in the attacking line when meeting teams of their own class. Therefore, in spite of having their own arena to operate upon, their success over Luton was not an assured happening. In fact, Southern League struggles foreshadowed a close and stern struggle, with low scoring on both sides. This deduction was partially falsified, as Fulham won by the tolerably large score (for a cup-tie) of 3 goals to 1, but the actual credit of the victory was somewhat tinged by a misfortune which befel their opponents in the first period of the play. Durrant, the clever outside-right forward of Luton, happened to re-start an old sprain of the muscles of the right leg, and although he went on the field after the interval, nearly all the effectiveness that he showed at the opening of the struggle was lacking. His runs and centres had been the feature of the play up to the time of his partial disablement, and he was the hero of the only goal for his side.

The "Daily Mail" has the following:—"On paper form this game was the pick of the 'divisional finals' of the Association Cup qualifying competition in the South, and it provided a fine struggle for the most part. But in the second period Luton were handicapped by the breakdown of their crack forward, Durrant (who had been performing in brilliant fashion), and had to play second fiddle for the remainder of the match. Luton seemed inclined to indulge in tripping tactics when their opponents were acting on the offensive, and were twice penalised in the first twenty minutes. In each case the free kick was taken by Orr, the Fulham right back, and each time Soar got the ball immediately and placed well into goal for Connor and Lawrence to score. Thus, though they had been playing quite as well or even rather better than their opponents, Luton were quickly two goals behind. Towards the end of the first half Durrant shot a splendid goal for Luton, but when this player's right leg was found to have

given way during the interval, the last hope of the Strawplaiters had gone, although they contested the issue heartily right up to the close. Fulham undoubtedly had the best of the luck, but deserved to win.

The draw for the intermediate round in the English Cup Competition took place yesterday. Fulham have to go to West Ham, Plymouth Argyle to Brentford, and Woolwich Arsenal to Bristol to play the Rovers, while New Brompton will be at home to Bristol City and Reading to Gainsborough Trinity.

The match for next Saturday at Luton will be with Tottenham Hotspur, who yesterday beat Bristol Rovers by 2 goals to 1 in a Western League match.

Saturday was a very disappointing day for Luton footballers. The fact is we had all been counting on a thumping good gate and a glorious victory into the bargain, and in both these directions the matter fell far short of our expectations. The weather spoiled the attendance, and I think to a large extent it also spoiled the play.

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The ground was in a terrible condition, and the Luton men appeared to find it particularly difficult to keep a footing. They were handicapped still more seriously by the injury to Durrant, who for sixty minutes out of the ninety was a passenger pure and simple. He could not run at all, and except when the ball went right to his feet, he could not touch it. I think the attack would have been far more effective in the second half if Durrant had not come on to the field at all.

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During the thirty minutes that he was really playing, Durrant was the most conspicuous of the forward string, though Eaton is deserving of great credit for the assiduous way in which he kept him on the go. These two in that half-hour played a wonderfully attractive game, and were easily the best wing on the field.

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Their passing was beautifully timed, neither of them held the ball a minute longer than necessary, and they kept a sufficient distance from each other to run the opposing halves and back off their legs. Far different was it on the other wing, where Turner spoiled what might have been a fine exhibition on his own part by hugging the ball till the last possible moment.

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I think everybody is ready to admit that Turner is one of the best forwards we have got. In energy and skill he is beyond reproach, and in one respect at any rate it is a pleasure to see the amount of work he puts in, but he tries to do too much on his own, and the result is not as satisfactory as might be wished.

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His partner, it must be admitted, does not inspire the greatest confidence, for his passes are few and far between, and he delays too long in getting in his centre. Moreover, Allsopp has a very unfortunate habit of coming a cropper at the critical moment. He played a grand game against Watford, but otherwise his displays have not been all that could be desired.

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McKee was not altogether at his best on Saturday, and he seemed to tire a good deal towards the finish. Perhaps that was not surprising in view of the state of the ground, of which, in the centre, he had had the full advantage. He worked pretty hard, but never seemed so much like getting through as when, early in the game, he was pushed over from behind and appealed in vain for a penalty. If the penalty had been given, as I thought it ought to have been, what a different story subsequent events might have told.

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Still, on the whole, it cannot be said that our forwards played a bad game. Even after Fulham had scored a couple of goals, the men in the front string played with wonderful coolness and confidence, and if Durrant had not been crippled, I think they would have been quite equal to the task of pulling the game out of the fire.

It was in the defence that our great weakness lay, and that is all the more remarkable as it was the defence which we had learned to regard as our chief source of strength. It is our defence that has been triumphing over opposing teams, as our goal record sufficiently proves, but on this occasion the play of the Luton backs was decidedly rocky.

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McEwen never played a bit like himself. As an old Cup-tie fighter, as a member of the Cup team of last year, one would have expected him to be as cool as a cucumber, but instead of that, the excitement seemed to quite get the better of his judgment. Bennett also was not so safe as usual, and though the pair of them were as dashing as ever, they did not combine with it their customary prudence.

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I don't think Thompson could fairly be blamed for either of the goals. Taking the match all through, he was not very severely tested, but the first two goals he had no chance at all with, and the third was obtained by a remarkably fine shot.

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As to the half-backs, they were good if not brilliant. The ground in the middle made it very difficult for Holdstock, and he consequently seemed unusually slow, but he nevertheless did some capital work, and where he failed I think it was his misfortune rather than his fault. Bob Hawkes gave a very good account of himself, and the same may be said of Fred, though he would have done better had he conceded fewer free kicks.

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In this connection, however I am bound to say that I think that Mr Milward is becoming a little fussy and giving free kicks with unnecessary freedom. No one deprecates rough or foul play more than I do, but though Mr. Milward is regarded, and I believe rightly so, as one of our most capable referees, I cannot help saying that I think he is disposed to be a trifle too exacting.

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When the whistle is frequently sounding, it robs the game of a great deal of its interest, and also renders it very difficult for a team to get together and show effective combination. Of course, it is better for a referee to err in this direction than go to the other extreme and allow too much latitude, but surely there is a happy medium.

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Although the verdict on Saturday went so decisively against Luton, and would seem to corroborate the draw made down here earlier in the season by Fulham, I am still convinced that the Lutonians are much the better team. Fulham certainly showed to better advantage on this occasion than they did at the first meeting, but even so I am not inclined to regard them as a very formidable lot.

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Their first two goals on Saturday were nothing more or less than flukes, for up till the moment they were obtained and for a long time after, Luton played much the better football. Still, the Londoners have two or three good men in their ranks—notably Soar and Fryer. The right-winger is a grand player, being speedy and clever into the bargain, and I doubt if there is his superior in the Southern League. Fletcher also is a very good man, but the only man to rival Soar, though in a different department, is Fryer, whose great height gives him a big advantage in keeping goal.

The wet weather doubtless kept many Lutonians from going to London to see the match. One of the London papers on Saturday mentioned 2,000 as being the number of Lutonians present, but if it had said 200 it would have been a good deal nearer the mark. The Midland Company's special excursion conveyed 130, but there were 142 cheap tickets issued by the 11.20 train, and 65 by the 8.35, making 337 in all. The Great Northern also took some, but the probability is that the Lutonians at the match did not number 500.

The gate at Fulham realised £271, or only a little more than half what had been expected. After deducting expenses, Luton's share would come to something like £125.

It generally happens, or seems to happen, that Luton catch teams at the top of their form. This was the case on Saturday, for it was freely said that Fulham had not previously played such a game as they did then. It promises to be so again with Tottenham Hotspur next Saturday.

At the beginning of the season, Tottenham were giving away points with astonishing freedom, but they have recently taken quite a different turn, as is shown by their smashing victory over Brighton and Hove last Saturday, and their equally meritorious win over Bristol Rovers on Monday.

Therefore, it may confidently be expected that Luton will have to go all the way. Indeed, they will have to be in their very best form to make sure of a win. It is extremely unfortunate that Durrant will be unable to turn out, but I am told that his injury will demand a two or three weeks' rest.

The team is not yet definitely fixed up, but will be selected from Thompson, Bennett, McEwen, F. Hawkes, R. Hawkes, Holdstock, White, Eaton, Storey, McKee, Turner, and Allsopp. The kick-off is at 2.30.

Last week I expressed the hope that somebody would be good enough to do Luton a good turn by putting a spoke in Pompey's wheel. No sooner said than done, it appears, for Southampton came to the rescue on Saturday, beating Portsmouth on their own ground by a goal to nil.