

THE DIVISIONAL FINAL.

FINE STRUGGLE AT CRAVEN COTTAGE.

"UNLUCKY LUTON."

As was expected earlier in the season the final of division 7 was fought out by Luton and Fulham. Last year the two sides met and Luton playing at home defeated their rivals of Saturday. Then the Fulham lot were of poor quality and in the second division of the Southern League. Since then they have earned the right to figure in the first division, where they have been doing on the whole very well. With Luton they were deputed to fight out the earlier matches and they have come through successfully. A fortnight ago they were accounting for West Norwood, whilst Luton were sending their old and dear neighbours Watford right about face. During the past week the men have been in training at Brighton, while Luton have contented themselves with spending their time at home. They expected to play the same team as last Saturday, whilst the Craven Cottage lot did not select their side until Saturday morning. Mr. Millward was the referee, and the following were the teams:—

LUTON.

Thompson

Bennett

McEwen

F. Hawkes

Holdstock

R. Hawkes

Durrant

Eaton

McKee

Turner

Allsopp

O

Lawrence

McQueen

Connor

Fletcher

Soar

Robotham

Gray

Waterson

Turner

Orr

Fryer

FULHAM.

Fulham won the toss, and kicked with the advantage of wind, which blew fairly hard. Holdstock was soon prominent, for he nobly stopped a rush by the homesters. A foul was awarded Fulham, and Luton was pulled up. Then McKee got on the tack and passed well to Durrant, but the ball went behind.

Holdstock had a shot for goal, but Fryer was "at home," and he saved well. Luton got a corner forced by Durrant, but this was soon cleared. The next item was a foul by Gray, which was taken by Bennett, who placed the leather over the bar. A foul followed by McKee, and after a pause Thompson caught the ball and threw away time in great style.

Bob Hawkes was now conspicuous with some fine head and feet work and broke up the Fulham attack altogether. Bob Hawkes just cleared the bar with a grand shot, and shortly afterwards he gave a free kick away.

Connor then worked his way through, and beat Thompson at close range with a shot that crashed into the net with great force. Tremendous enthusiasm prevailed, and the Fulham crowd cheered themselves hoarse.

Fulham came again, and the ball was shot by the post. Soar, who was now very prominent, was accidentally crippled by Bob Hawkes, but the

former soon recovered. Luton now had a turn at pressing. The halves were feeding the forwards with rare judgment, and Holdstock made several openings for McKee, which that player took full advantage of.

Allsopp swung across a fine centre to Durrant, but the latter was unable to reach the ball in time. A foul by Holdstock then threatened disaster to the Luton team.

Orr took the kick, and Lawrence scored a second goal for Fulham amid tremendous cheering. Luton now played desperately, and Turner was then fouled, but nothing came of the free kick.

Fulham had another foul given against them, and from the free kick the ball was sent out to Durrant on the wing, but the shot went wide. Durrant again secured the ball from the centre and passed to Allsopp, who, however, shot just over the bar. Hard luck for Luton.

Turner next ran down, and crashed the ball the wrong side of the post. Allsopp also had a shot, but the ball failed to hit the mark.

Luton were now pressing strongly, and making a gallant attempt to equalise. They forced a corner, which came to nothing. Connor then raced down, and shot wide. At this point the game was full of excitement, and Turner was cautioned by the referee for fouling. The referee appeared to be rather down on Luton.

Durrant was in fine form and, after a fine run, he beat Fryer with a stinging shot. Fryer fell down in attempting to clear.

This success spurred Luton on to increased efforts, and cheered to the echo by their supporters, they pressed for all they knew. The mud, wind, and rain handicapped both teams, and the ball was very heavy. Fulham now attacked strongly, and Thompson was lucky to clear.

The next incidents were a number of fouls on both sides. Soar fouled McEwen, and McKee fouled Gray. Durrant got offside, and Fulham then came down on the left, but the ball went behind. Allsopp was given offside when in a good position, but Luton quickly returned to the attack.

From a dangerous attack by Fulham, Bennett had no alternative but to kick out. Luton were now hard pressed, but they defended stoutly. The muscles of Durrant's thigh gave way at this point, and he was but of little use afterwards. From a dashing run by Allsopp, Eaton headed just over the bar.

This was one more good opportunity thrown away, but Luton were not disheartened and Fulham were hard pressed to keep their goal intact.

Luton continued to force the play, the players striving every nerve to secure supremacy. During a concerted attack on the Fulham citadel, Fryer had to kick the ball out.

Shortly afterwards he had to save a stinging shot from Bob Hawkes, and again one from Eaton. Little Mac was on the alert, and returned the ball very smartly, just when Fulham were pressing at their best. Allsopp forced a corner, but the ball went behind.

Midfield play followed, and half-time arrived with the score:—

FULHAM	...	...	...	2
LUTON	...	...	...	1

After the interval, Luton were the first to attack. Durrant, who had been badly injured during the first half, came out with the players, but his first shot was rather tame.

Turner next nearly got through for Luton. A foul was then given against McEwen. Orr took the kick, and McQueen headed high over the bar. Fulham were now very aggressive, and Orr sent the ball over the bar from a free-kick given for a foul by McEwen on Soar.

A great deal of spirit was now infused into the game, and the ball travelled from one end to the other with amazing swiftness. Fred. Hawkes fouled a Fulham player, but nothing came of the free-kick which followed. Luton were now having by far the best of the game, and their supporters encouraged them to greater efforts. Fred. Hawkes put the ball just by the post, much to the relief of Fulham.

The referee now distinguished himself by giving a palpably incorrect decision in penalising Peter Turner for an alleged foul. Fortunately for Luton, this was cleared, and Luton breathed freely again.

Fulham next forced a corner, but the danger was averted by McEwen with a superb kick. Peter Turner collided with Orr, who was carried off the field. Upon resuming, the Fulham goal narrowly escaped capture, Soar robbing Bob Hawkes when he was about to shoot. Fulham then pressed hotly, but McEwen averted the threatened danger. After Thompson had saved, Robotham scored a third goal for Fulham.

FINAL SCORE: FULHAM, 3; LUTON, 1.

There need be no beating about the bush. The Luton men on Saturday met a luckier team on the day's play, and lost. I would particularly emphasise the words "on the day's play," for I have not the least doubt that Luton would beat the Fulhamites twice out of three times. One thing that threw the Luton men out of their paces was the state of the turf. It was almost like a ploughed field with a bit of grass rising out of the water. Once Holdstock kicked at the ball and displaced a large puddle of water to the discomfort of the players round about.

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The Luton half-backs could hardly check themselves. If a man got past there was no recovery, for the ground was so slippery. I do not think it was the Fulham men who beat the visitors so much as the sodden turf. One man at least seemed positively to revel in it. That was Soar—the outside right. The way he cantered over the ground was little short of marvellous. I should think he practised running on loose sand down at Brighton!

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The other forwards were good, too. They were constantly after the ball. Though not a first-class centre, Connor attracted notice by his very good over-head passing. That was really all he did well. Lawrence was fairly speedy, in fact the whole five were all very lively and wanted careful watching. The half-backs were not conspicuous, but they proved a useful trio.

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Orr was the better of the two backs. I thought he was done for when he was carried off the field, but it only took him a couple of minutes to recover. And didn't he go after that! In fact, he played so well that one could not understand how he had been hurt. I was almost driven to the conclusion that there was a deal of sham about it. Turner was useful in stopping the rushes of the right wing, but in the first half he was repeatedly beaten by Durrant and Eaton. Fryer had some very difficult shots to save.

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And what shall I say of the Luton team? I believe they were a team of triers. The first goal was due to an alleged foul by Bob Hawkes. I was closely watching him, but how the referee could construe his action into a foul I do not know. His opponent had got the ball at his left foot, and Bob went and planted his Trilby at the ball, but the Fulham man had moved the ball and Hawkes went sprawling over. The whistle sounded and a foul was given.

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A goal resulted! Soon afterwards, I believe, it was Holdstock who collided with a Fulham man. Free kick again, and another goal for Fulham. If Lawrence was not off-side when he played the ball he was very near it. I should think the Luton backs and goalkeeper had sunk in the mud for there was very little movement perceptible. Had the ground been dry I feel sure Thompson would have done much better with both shots. Remember, under Saturday's conditions he had no chance whatever.

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Durrant up to the time of his injury was the best player on the field. He made rings round the other players, and his shot with which he scored was a smasher. The force of it appeared to knock Fryer off his feet, and the ball shot up into the corner of the goal as if it had struck against

a wall. I believe the cheering which ensued from the Lutonians present was almost equal to that made by Fulham. A bright movement was again started. Durrant was going splendidly, and looked like repeating his success, when his muscles gave way.

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I greatly admired his pluck and persistence in remaining, but it would have been better had he left then. Eaton worked very hard indeed, and gave Durrant grand passes time after time. McKee found it difficult to play his usual excellent game in the centre, but though well looked after he put in some smart moves. Turner was as hard-working as ever, and tried time after time to make openings for his side. Early in the game he came in for the referee's notice, but why he should have done so was not apparent.

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Allsopp could not get on at all. Everything he did seemed to be pre-destined to bad luck, and try how he would he could make little headway. He seems to have fallen off a bit, and though we cannot expect one player always to be in form, there are many people disappointed with his display. The difference between his play and that of, say, at Millwall, was very marked. Tommy's fault, it seems to me, is that of not going ahead with the ball when he might, so as to put in a centre on the run—two very necessary accomplishments for a wing forward.

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In the half-back line chief credit must be given to Bob Hawkes. His feelings were very much hurt because of the foul awarded against him by Mr. Millward which led to the first goal, but even referees are not infallible. Bob played a good game, though F. Hawkes had a pretty lively pair to look after on his wing and he did not spare them. The state of the ground was against Luton's style of play and Hawkes was a sufferer accordingly. There were whispers of discontent against Holdstock, but he played a pretty good game. The ground was against him, and the style also. It was just such a game as Freddy White would have revelled in—but he was not selected by the powers which seemed a mistake.

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Bennett was the better back, though he found it difficult to put in his usual tackling abilities. McEwen was not so successful as could have been wished. Soar proved a perfect terror, and it took all Mac's time to hold him back. Perhaps, after one incident, I had better say, kept him in check. Thompson was not so successful as usual, but when he moved he had to carry heavy clots of mud on his shoes, and this did not conduce to good goal-keeping. On a dry ground I reckon he would have saved two of the shots which scored.

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I know it is usual, when a team loses, to blame the referee. And, in my opinion, he was too grandmotherly in his decisions. I believe in a man keeping the players well in hand, but I do not agree with him penalising a visitor when a home man goes down. Once, inside the 12 yards line I saw a Luton man badly treated, but the referee did not notice it. At first I thought he was waiting to see if the Lutonian would get through, but there was not much chance of it after the bump he received. The Luton men could hardly look at a Fulhamite, but that a foul was given. For instance, if two opponents ran one against another, and one went down, it was 10 to 1 that the referee would give the decision against the man standing. In fairness to Mr. Millward I should state that once he pulled Fulham up for off-side, which decision surprised the Luton spectators present. Generally, Luton had much more to complain of than Fulham.

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I really believe we should have won or, at least, drawn had Durrant been able to turn out fit and well in the second half. He was on the side of the field that just suited him and he would have made things move had he had the full use of his leg. His injury will keep him out of the field for a fortnight or more. Eaton will probably go outside right, Storey, inside, McKee, centre, Turner and Allsopp left. That appears to me to be the best team available unless Allsopp stands down in favour of a junior, for instance, Dimmock.

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*Says the Chronicle:—*There was just a suspicion

Says the *Chronicle* :—There was just a suspicion of good fortune in Fulham's victory over Luton, for while the visitors were playing better football the home team were getting the goals, the two which they scored in the first half both accruing from free-kicks. In the closing stage Fulham played a winning game, and outstayed the Southern League "undefeateds," who experienced a great misfortune in the collapse of Durrant, the clever right-winger having sustained a painful injury to the right thigh. It is worthy of note that the Luton eleven contained four home-born players—Durrant and all three half-backs.

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"Linesman" in the *Morning Leader* :—Fulham won this match by their quickness and dash, plus a little help from the Fates. In a more 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. Of the forwards, Connor was the chief disappointment, his failure being attributable partly to excitement. Soar, was spasmodic, and though he frequently got the better of McEwen, he was apt to finish badly, though on occasion his judgment was superb. Lawrence was dashing and Fletcher strong, but there was a certain incoherency in the manoeuvres. The halves played a distinctly good game, and the defence generally was very fine. Orr is quite the best-tempered and most sportsmanlike back I know. 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 attendance numbered 9,000.

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[The *Daily Mail* had the following on Monday :—The ten divisional winners in the qualifying competition for the Football Association Cup include three Second Division clubs and four teams in the Southern League. The most notable event in connection with Saturday's games was the defeat of Luton, who as the only undefeated side in the

Southern League competition took the field favourites in their match against Fulham.

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The *Daily Express* said :—As a game the tie was good as Cup ties go. Luton were very much in earnest, but beyond a patent superiority in the half-back line they had no pull over the West London team, who were determined triers to a man, and, above all, Fletcher, the inside right, a perfect glutton for work. Two grand outside rights in Soar (Fulham) and Durrant (Luton) showed exceptional speed, footwork, centreing, and shooting at goal. They were the star players of the match. Durrant scored Luton's only goal with a lightning "grounders" which Fryer touched but could not save. But he was crippled just before half-time, and with his disablement Luton lost their best forward.