

LUTON v. KETTERING

Played at Luton on Monday. Result:—

Luton	2 goals.
Kettering	1 goal.

The Luton team was identical with that which did duty on Saturday, and the Kettering representatives were as follow:—Dorrington; Bosworth and Draper; Woods, Eccleston, and Grant; Webb, Smith, Leigh, Morris, and Hartwell. Referee, Mr. H. Walker (Reading).

There was a surprisingly large attendance at this match on Monday, considering the cold and cheerless state of the weather. Perhaps the fact that it was the concluding match of the first half of the season and that so far Luton had escaped defeat in the League tournament, constituted an additional attraction, for the merits of the match itself were hardly sufficient to account for the presence of three thousand persons on such a day.

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When the time for the kick-off arrived, the referee had not put in an appearance, and Mr. Arkell, a linesman, took his place for the time being, Mr. G. W. Walker temporarily officiating on the line. The ground was in a terribly greasy condition, and slips were frequent, while towards the finish it became very difficult to get the ball out of the mud in the centre of the field.

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Kettering won the toss, but there was very little in it. After a short spell of mid-field play, the visitors got away on the right, and McEwen conceded a corner to Webb, who placed beautifully, the Luton goal as a consequence having several narrow escapes. Hartwell next profited by a miss by Bennett, and placed across the mouth of goal, but Webb shot miserably wide.

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Some further attempts by the visitors were frustrated by McEwen, who was loudly cheered for some dashing and effective work, and Luton then made the running and forced a corner, which was badly placed by Allsopp. A beautiful centre by Durrant put the Kettering goal in great jeopardy, the ball being kept hovering round the mouth for some seconds, and pressure was only relieved by a corner. The defenders had only breathing time allowed them, however, for after Allsopp had placed, the ball went out to White, and he drove it home with all the power he could put behind it.

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For a time play ruled much in Luton's favour, and Durrant was fouled as he was closing in, but the free kick was not turned to account. McEwen was again cheered for the way in which he nipped a Kettering effort in the bud, and Allsopp afterwards hit the cross-bar with a lovely shot, just as the whistle sounded for offside. Durrant next middled all along the goal-line, and Dorrington failing in an attempt to reach the ball, Turner had a fine chance, but shot wide.

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A moment later, following upon a well-placed corner, Allsopp very cleverly screwed the ball into goal, but was given offside. Then the visitors took a turn and were rewarded with four corners in quick succession. Luton had no sooner cleared from these than Kettering were down again, and centres from right and left gave the home defence a very anxious time. The homesters responded with a good run, and had an unproductive corner, but Kettering got away again, and some amusement was caused by the referee's curious decisions.

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Leigh, I think it was, received the ball in a palpably offside position, but Mr. Walker ignored the appeal of the Luton players and the protests of the spectators. When, however, after some smart combined work, the Kettering forwards got in the vicinity of the Luton goal, the whistle went for offside, although there did not then seem to be a suspicion of offside about it. The crowd took it that Mr. Walker, recognising his first mistake, attempted to rectify it by another, and there certainly appeared to be some justification for the assumption.

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A brilliant run by the Luton right wing, from a pass by McKee, took the play to the other end, and a vigorous attack ensued, in the course of which several chances presented themselves, but nothing more tangible than a corner accrued. Webb responded with a nice run for the visitors, and Fred Hawkes was fortunate in heading away the shot with which the outside right finished up. From a fine centre by Turner at the other end, McKee had only the custodian to beat, but Dorrington caught the shot and was charged over by the centre forward just as he got rid of the ball.

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Good play by Luton put Luton on the aggressive again, but after another fruitless corner, the visitors got away from an offside position, which escaped the referee's notice, and eventually a centre from the right wing enabled Hartwell to get the equalising goal, after Thompson had saved well from Leigh. Luton made vigorous efforts to recover their lead, and Draper and Co. were very severely put to it to keep them out, but in this they succeeded, and the interval arrived with honours easy.

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Luton started the second half as though they meant business, and except for one or two runs by the visitors, fairly monopolised the play. All the attempts at goal-getting by the forwards, however, went awry, Durrant failing badly on one or two occasions, and it was again left to White to give the homesters the lead. This he did from a centre by Allsopp, putting in two rattling shots, the first rebounding off one of the defenders and the second finding the net. This must have made the centre-half a wonderfully happy man, and he had a very trying but very gratifying ordeal to go through in the hand-shaking he received from the rest of the team.

For some time after this Luton again had all the best of the play, but no matter how often the forwards got the ball up to the neighbourhood of goal, they always seemed to be lacking at the finish. Turner and McKee in particular raised hopes again and again, playing splendidly until they got within shooting range, and then kicking badly or passing out to the wings when it seemed that only a final effort was wanted to achieve success.

Towards the finish Kettering did rather more than defend, and McEwen withdrew Eaton from the forward line to the assistance of the backs and half-backs. Notwithstanding this, or perhaps because of it, the visitors pressed with considerable vigour, and just upon time were rewarded with a corner. Webb placed nicely, and another corner resulted, from which the ball was headed just by the upright. It was the last incident of note, and the spectators, and probably the Luton players, were glad enough to hear the whistle go.

Although the Luton forwards showed so badly in the scoring department, they played much better football than on Saturday, but the right wing again did not come up to the Eaton and Storey combination. Durrant tries too often to take the ball to the farthest possible point before putting in his centre, whereas Eaton almost invariably muddled at once, placing the ball about ten yards from goal instead of aiming for the goal itself, and there can be no doubt that his is the more effective method. McKee and Turner worked together beautifully in mid-field, but failed at the crucial moment. Allsopp played a very good game.

Of the halves, White was the most conspicuous. Of course, his two goals singled him out for special notice, but apart from that he played a good game under extremely bad conditions, the going in the middle of the pitch being very heavy. Fred Hawkes was responsible for some capital work, but Bob, who did so well on Saturday, was not at all up to form on this occasion. McEwen was up to full concert pitch at back, and though he made one or two misses, the almost inevitable result of his dashing tactics, his was nevertheless a great performance. Bennett likewise gave a first-rate exhibition, and Thompson did his little well in goal.

As to the visitors, it is not necessary to say much, except that in view of their capital display one cannot quite understand some of the beatings they have received. Both backs were very sound, the outside forwards showed to considerable advantage, and the other men also gave a good account of themselves. With all that, however, they should have been beaten on Monday by more than a single goal.

Monday's victory took Luton to the top of the League table. It will be seen that they have only the same number of points as Southampton, but are entitled to precedence by reason of a slightly better goal average, and, moreover, they have three matches in hand.

	Goals.						
	Plyd.	Wn.	Lt.	Dn.	For.	Agst.	P.
Luton Town	15	9	0	6	21	10	24
Southampton.....	13	10	4	4	39	20	24
Reading	17	8	3	6	27	19	22
Plymouth Arçyle.....	16	9	4	3	27	13	21
Portsmouth	16	9	4	3	23	18	21
Millwall	16	9	5	2	38	21	20
Bristol Rovers	16	8	6	2	32	18	18
Queen's Park Rangers...	16	7	5	4	28	18	18
Wellingborough	14	6	6	2	21	25	14
Brentford	15	5	7	3	14	19	13
Swindon Town	16	4	7	5	18	27	13
Tottenham Hotspur.....	15	3	6	6	15	20	12
West Ham United	14	4	7	3	17	21	11
Fulham	18	2	5	6	10	13	10
Kettering	16	4	10	2	16	34	10
New Brompton.....	16	2	8	6	10	26	10
Northampton.....	17	4	11	2	17	40	10
Brighton and Hove.....	14	3	8	3	21	22	9

The fight of the season on the Town ground is that which will take place on Saturday next, when Southampton will take the field against the Luton team. Although a defeat would still leave Luton in a relatively better position than the Saints, it would seriously shake our faith in the ability of the homesters to preserve the proud place to which they have attained.

The display of the home forwards in recent games does not warrant undue optimism. In the last three matches they have only scored a goal between them, which is certainly far from satisfactory. The question is: Can the forward line be improved? Personally, I think with the material at command, it could be very much improved, but probably the directors, knowing how much blame they would incur if they made an alteration, and then sustained defeat, will prefer to leave things as they are.

That is perfectly natural, but at the same time it must be obvious to anybody that we cannot expect to go on winning matches on recent form. Luton must get goals as well as prevent other teams from getting them, and if the forward line, as now arranged, is not equal to the task, it becomes the duty of the directors to look out for the weak spots. I should be the last to advocate unnecessary changes, but at the same time I feel absolutely sure that an alteration could be made with great advantage.