

The Southern League.

LUTON v. WEST HAM.

Played at Luton on Saturday. Result:—

Luton	1 goal.
West Ham	nil.

The teams were as follow:—

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

West Ham—Griffiths; Eccles and Oakes; Bigden, Allison, and Blythe; Kirby, Lyon, Bridgeman, Mercer, and Satterthwaite.

Referee, Mr. J. Tillotson (Birmingham).

If Luton never had any luck before, they were decidedly lucky on Saturday in securing a couple of points at the expense of West Ham—lucky in not being a goal or two to the bad at the interval, and luckier still perhaps in netting the ball about a couple of minutes before time.

Of course, there never ought to have been any doubt about the result of this match, seeing that the Hammers are nearly at the bottom of the League table and had only obtained one solitary point away from home. But we did not know how badly some of the Luton men could play until we saw the first half of Saturday's match.

The day was absolutely perfect from a football point of view—no bright sunshine, scarcely a breath of wind, mild enough for the comfort of the spectators and not too warm for the players. The gate, however, was not a large one, there never being more than three thousand persons present.

For the first few minutes play was of an uneventful character, but at length the visitors worked their way up the field and a very nice middle was put in from the left. Thompson cleared this, but was more severely tested a moment later by Satterthwaite, who sent in a hot shot, and this was followed by yet another, but the Luton custodian was in good form, and negotiated the different attempts with a smartness that did him credit.

Bennett soon afterwards created an amusing diversion by sending the ball flying into the grand stand, and still more fun was caused subsequently by one of the occupants of the bench adjoining the pitch, when he overbalanced himself in an effort to kick the ball back into play.

The spectators laughed the more heartily at these incidents, perhaps, because there was so little of an exhilarating nature in the exhibition being given by the Luton players. Even at this early stage it was the visitors who were showing the better form. Bob Hawkes was responsible for one or two good efforts, and McKee was fouled, apparently when well within the penalty area, but the referee gave a free kick only and placed the ball on the very line.

Allsopp took the kick and shot wide, but directly afterwards he got in a good centre from which, however, the visitors cleared. The Hammers going to the other end, Blythe put in a beautiful shot, and Lyon also sent in a trimmer, but Thompson was as safe as the bank.

At this part of the game, the Luton forwards were continually sacrificing opportunities by their bad passes, Turner particularly being a sinner in this respect, and time after time the ball was given to an opponent. Kirby had just sent in one shot, and was making the running again when he was challenged by McEwen, and Mac was applauded for the clever way in which he robbed his speedy adversary.

Turner and Allsopp showed up with a good

run, and Allsopp swinging the ball across, Fred Hawkes shot wide. Allsopp again went away at a tangent, but waited too long before taking his kick for the centre, as he often did during the game, and the ball rebounded off one of the visitors who had managed to get back.

A long shot by White was punted out by Griffiths, and then Luton made their most likely-looking attempt up to date, the whole of the forwards participating, and after Griffiths had punched away a header from McKee, Bob Hawkes shot just by the post. Bridgeman then threatened danger at the other end, but was finally knocked off the ball by McEwen, and Luton returning to the attack, Turner and McKee nullified a good opening by overdoing the passing business.

A strong and sustained assault was next made by Luton, but the Hammers at length broke away, and Bridgeman sent in a very dangerous shot, which was promptly and cleverly dealt with by Thompson. Before half-time was called, Bob Hawkes had tried Griffiths with a fast grounder, but taking the game altogether, the visitors had played much smarter football than the homesters, and it was hard lines on them that they had not obtained a lead.

Happily for Luton, the play underwent a change in the second half, for though West Ham did not slacken their efforts, the homesters improved wonderfully and had by far the larger share of the exchanges. At the very outset, Luton went away with a rush, and Allsopp put in a fine centre, giving Turner a grand chance, but the inside-left skied the ball, which passed yards and yards over the bar.

Griffiths cleared from a good middle by Eaton, and then Allsopp got through in capital style, but lost his head directly he found himself clear, and instead of running the ball in, took a long shot. It was a good one, but the custodian easily saved. Turner next worked his way up, but his shot was badly judged, and the visitors going to the other end. Bennett had to give a corner. Kirby placed splendidly and another corner resulted.

In the latter case, Mercer took the kick, which proved to be a very bad one, and Bob Hawkes and Eaton making a rattling run, the outside-right put nicely across the goal, only for Allsopp to shoot miserably wide. From a free kick, Luton made a prolonged attack on the West Ham goal, and once or twice its downfall seemed inevitable, but ultimately Williams shot just over the bar.

Give-and-take play followed, and then Allsopp forced a corner, which led up to a grand shot by Turner. Another corner was conceded, and Eaton placed well, but again Allsopp sent very wide of the mark. The visitors retaliated, and one of the forwards—Bridgeman, I think it was—going for the ball at the same time as McEwen, they both came down together, but Mac fell on the other man and knocked all the breath out of him, causing play to be suspended for a few moments.

When hostilities were resumed, Eaton got away and finished up with a shot that Griffiths steered along the crossbar, and Allsopp returning the ball, Eaton shot again, and the custodian kicked behind. Nothing resulted from the corner, but a brilliant shot by Allsopp gave Griffiths a warm handful, and McKee coming up at the time, made desperate and not quite legitimate efforts to relieve the goalkeeper of possession, but without success.

Fred Hawkes missed the post by a few inches, and the visitors then going down the field, Satterthwaite, who was now playing inside-left instead of outside, put in a good shot, which was only just a little wide. Time was now rapidly passing away, and the spectators were regretfully coming to the conclusion that there would be no score, when Luton forced a corner, which was well placed by Allsopp.

There was no immediate result, but presently Eaton sent in a lovely shot, which Grimths fell down in endeavouring to clear. Allsopp rushed up, and he and McKee between them succeeded in getting the ball into the net, McKee putting on the finishing touch. Thus a rather disappointing match was brought to a sensational close, for it wanted only about a couple of minutes to time when the goal was scored.

The spectators were delighted enough at the result, though they could not help feeling some sympathy for the visitors, not only because of their plucky play, but also because the point thus snatched from them at the last moment might have been very valuable to them in their effort to escape the bottom places on the League table.

In the second half, Luton were no doubt considerably the better team, but in the first portion of the game the homesters gave a sad display of the rambling, scrambling, order, and anyone looking at them then could easily understand the reason of their losing matches away from home.

Even after the improvement took place, judgment was often wanting in turning to account the openings that had been hardly worked for. There was too much passing when passing was not needed, and there was also some erratic shooting when a little bolder effort on the part of the individual player might have carried him through. I suppose, however, that these are faults which may be more readily recognised from the grand stand than remedied on the field.

Thompson gave a good and consistent display all through, and McEwen was as indefatigable as ever, and what with putting in all he knew himself and encouraging those in front of him to keep the ball moving, he had a pretty busy time. Bennett was not too safe at the outset, but improved as the game proceeded. The halves gave a pretty good exhibition, but Williams was not quite at his best, and in the forward line it was difficult to discriminate.

Turner worked desperately hard, and if he had only exercised a little more judgment, would have given no cause for complaint. Allsop made some smart runs, but why does he wait so long to steady the ball before attempting his centre? Several times all his work was thrown away by this one fault, for if an opponent could not get to him, he could and did get in the way of the ball. Of the other three not much need be said, except that I think Bob Hawkes would have done better if he had been given more opportunities.

Luton have a pretty good holiday programme to get through, but unfortunately for the club's finances and for the prospects of Southern League points, most of the matches are away. On Good Friday Luton will be at home to Wellingborough in the return League match, but on Saturday, Monday, and Tuesday, they will be away at Tottenham, Northampton, and Brighton respectively.

There will, however, be a good match on the Town ground on Saturday, as Tottenham Hotspur Reserves are due to play our own Reserves in the return South-Eastern League match, and on Monday the final for the Beds Cup will be played.

It appears it was Blythe, of West Ham, who met with an injury at Luton on Saturday. On Monday he paid a visit to Prof. Atkinson, and it was found that he will be unable to play for a couple of weeks.

The fight between Southampton and Portsmouth was the principal event in the Southern League competition on Saturday, and as the Saints won by 2 goals to nil, they may now be regarded as almost a certainty for the championship. Bristol Rovers drew at Millwall at 3 goals all, and Tottenham had to be content with a pointless draw at Swindon. New Brompton beat Brentford by 3 goals to nil, and Fulham and Queen's Park Rangers gained similar victories over Brighton and Wellingborough respectively. Kettering beat Northampton by 3 to 1. Not a single one of the visiting teams gained a victory.