

The Southern League.

FULHAM v. LUTON.

Played at Craven Cottage on Saturday.
Result:—

Fulham		nil.
Luton		nil.

The teams were as follow:—

Fulham—Fryer; Ross and Sharp; Howarth, Gray, and Goldie; Soar, Fletcher, Wardrope, Graham, and Bell

Luton—Lindsay; Turner and McEwen; F. Hawkes, White, and R. Hawkes; Eaton, Lamberton, Penman, Ross, and Barnes

Referee, Mr. A. J. Barker (Hanley).

Both teams, it will be noted, were at full strength, Bob Hawkes making a welcome re-appearance after trying his ankle on Friday. Fulham had out the exact side which was victorious over the Spurs the previous Saturday. The Fulham officials had prepared for a twenty thousand gate, and I should judge not far short of that enviable number were present to welcome the players. Fulham were first out and received a grand reception, while the appearance of Ted Turner with Luton was almost as enthusiastically cheered. Ted is evidently a big favourite at Craven Cottage, where the spectators remember his many fine games for Fulham.

When Mr. Barker called the captains together it was a curious sight that presented itself, little Mac appearing quite a dwarf by the side of the lengthy Fryer. For a minute the crowd was tickled by the spectacle, but when the teams crossed over as a result of the Luton captain winning the toss, the spectators settled down to witness what proved a ding dong battle from start to finish. There was little advantage to be gained from the wind, but for the first five minutes Luton appeared likely to open the score, the play for this period being confined to the Fulham quarters. Right from the commencement Luton's right wing forced the game. Eaton, however, put the ball behind, and only a goal kick resulted

Still the attack was kept up, Goldie fouling Fred Hawkes somewhere near the spot from which Orr sent those two fine place kicks which meant so much in the Cup-tie last season. Turner on this occasion dropped the "free" almost identically in the same spot, but unfortunately his effort was not improved upon in the same way as his old clubmate's, and Ross relieved the pressure. Barnes almost did the trick from a fine pass by Lamberton, but Fryer's reach stood him in good stead and he just tipped the sphere over the bar at the extreme corner.

Naturally this state of affairs was rather distasteful to the spectators, who expected quite a different exhibition. But a mighty roar announced a diversion as Bell was observed to get away with the ball. Turner, who had been idle up to this point, quietly kicked into touch, and thus nipped the first Fulham effort in the bud. But the home players had now got into their stride, and the Luton defence had considerably more work to do. Howarth intercepted a nicely intended pass from Barnes to his partner, and for a moment things looked ugly for Luton, but ultimately the ball was put over.

Not to be denied, Fulham were quickly down again, Bell trying Lindsay with a well-intentioned effort, but Luton's goalie was on the spot and brought off a brilliant save. Fletcher was presented with a fine opening by Wardrope, who tricked at least three Luton players before parting with the ball, but the ex-Grimsby player missed badly, and the Lutonians present breathed again.

Barnes and Ross transferred the play and carried the ball towards the Fulham uprights, Ross (Fulham) having to concede a corner, although he should have cleared with ease. From this, the ball was kept bobbing about round Fryer for a minute or so, but someone finally placed it behind and danger passed. The play was once more taken to Luton's end and Mac was compelled to give a corner from a drive by Soar. Indeed, just here the play was very fast, each side having the advantage in turn, Fryer being severely tested with a fine shot by Eaton, while a minute later Bob Hawkes put in a shot which no one but a six-footer could have got at. It was a fine individual effort and fully deserved to score. The crowd cheered Fryer for bringing off a sensational save, as it looked a certain goal.

But the most heart-breaking incident from a Luton point of view happened about five minutes before the interval. Barnes brought the ball through in fine style on the left and slung across a beautiful centre. Lamberton drew the defence out, and the ball fell to Penman, who had practically an open goal to shoot at, but to the delight of the spectators he kicked at it wildly and the ball travelled over the bar when he could have easily walked in with it. It was a terrible miss, and Penman was visibly upset by his failure to take advantage of such an opening that scarcely occurs in a match more than once.

If the centre-forward had scored, no doubt it would have helped him considerably, inasmuch as it would have given him the confidence he evidently requires, for I am certain it is only nervousness that prevents him doing himself full justice, and once he could get over this feeling the better for himself and the Club. No other striking incident occurred previous to half-time, the teams retiring with a blank score-sheet.

On the resumption, during an attack by Luton, Goldie was injured and the game was stopped, but he quickly recovered. After Soar and McEwen had fought out one of their numerous tussles near the corner, the ball was observed to go into touch. By the way, McEwen held the Fulham outside-right all through the piece in grand style, and time after time fairly smothered his efforts when it looked all over bar shouting. If he could not stop Soar getting the ball, Mac never hesitated to get in the way of the centre, even if it meant giving a corner.

Some nice combined work on the part of the Luton attack led up to Lamberton getting the ball just outside the penalty line, and he let drive with a magnificent grounder which travelled at an enormous pace. Fryer threw himself full length across the goal, but the direction was just a trifle too wide, and the ball passed by the upright—on the wrong side for Luton. The spectators could hardly tell for a moment if the ball was in the net or no, for such was its pace that it passed over the line before Fryer could get down, and just a few inches would have told the tale. When it was discovered the net had not been pierced loud cheers rent the air. For a time Fulham pressed, and on one occasion Penman was given offside well in his own half. But Luton were by no means done with, and Ross was right through with a clear course for goal, when he was badly tripped from behind. He stumbled, but could not quite recover, and a grand chance was thus spoilt. I could hardly understand why Mr. Barker allowed the incident to pass without awarding a foul unless it was he thought Ross would have a better chance to score without stopping the game. Two or three chances were offered the visiting forwards hereabouts, but they failed to take advantage of them, and Eaton finally put over the line.

But they were not the only sinners, for Fletcher at the opposite end was presented with a fine opening, although Lindsay rather blocked the way. Just after, Lindsay brought off a grand save, the opposing left working the ball down and Graham let drive from close quarters. Time was rapidly drawing near, and Luton being fully content to divide the points, laid themselves out to defend their goal. Several unavailing corners were conceded to Fulham, but McEwen and Co. held the fort to the end, and the first Southern League point had been earned.

As recorded last week, a great improvement had set in at Watford, and I am pleased to state this welcome return to practice form was still further in evidence at Craven Cottage. When the players have settled down, it will be found they will be able to quite hold their own among the members of the Southern League. On Saturday the forwards did much better than in any previous match, especially in midfield. What is wanted is just a trifle more dash in front of goal and a few shots of the sort Lamberton failed to find the net with, only, of course, a bit nearer the bull's-eye. As stated above, Penman lacks confidence, otherwise he played a good game, while his two inside comrades were in fine form, Ross especially playing

a clever game all through. Eaton and Barnes were both in good trim, and altogether the front string gave the best exhibition so far this season.

The middle line also played in something like last season's form, Bob especially showing to advantage. He is a big favourite wherever he goes, and I think nowhere more than Fulham. Fred White had a troublesome customer to deal with in Wardrope, but the ex-Middlesboro' player was given few chances to get clear away. Turner's height came in useful several times when Fulham were pressing, and although he does not move across the goal quite so quickly as McEwen, he did his share in keeping a clean sheet. I have mentioned McEwen as usually coming out top sawyer against what is one of the most dangerous right wings in the South, while Lindsay still further endeared himself to those Lutonians who were present by some really magnificent saves. Up to the present he has quite filled Thompson's shoes, and no higher praise is required, I am sure.

Fulham have got together a good side undoubtedly, the forwards being a much better balanced lot than last season when it was really a right-wing attack only. Soar is still the author of the majority of the attacking work, but Bell is a fine player, while Wardrope, with just a trifle more dash, will make a brilliant centre. At half-back also the side appear stronger, Goldie being seen to greater advantage than I have previously seen him. The two new backs played a strong game, although I heard expressions round the ropes which told in favour of last year's pair. Fryer is still a grand custodian, and was really only beaten with Lamberton's shot, which he could not have got down to if it had been a foot the other side of the upright.

Among the spectators present was Mr. F. J. Wall, the secretary of the Football Association, in search of talent for the International trials. He was anxious to know how many Englishmen were in Luton's ranks, and asked the Luton Secretary to mark his match card. When Mr. Green informed him the whole side were home-bred, he expressed himself as highly delighted.

The following are some of the Press comments on the match:—

"Daily Chronicle":—"Fulham's draw with Luton was a grievous disappointment, though this must not prevent a warm appreciation of efforts of the Strawplaiters, who survived this ordeal in the hostile camp. It is pleasing to see Luton getting back into form, though they seem to have the same weakness as last season. They can't get goals, but they won't let others have them.

"With few exceptions the men played that sort of game that one seldom sees nowadays—a harmonious mixture of healthy vigour and artistic touches. In the latter respect the most prominent player on the field was Luton's left half-back, R. Hawkes. This player has not the physique to engage in the robust part of the game, but he has that which is perhaps better—the ability to make full use of the strength which is vouchsafed to him. On three occasions he twiddled the Fulham defence round his fingers, tempted them to rush to a spot where they would be of least hindrance to him, and then, making a wrench, as the coursing reporter puts it, he would let fly at goal with a shot that caused the brow of Fryer to wrinkle with anxiety. Hawkes has not the physical symmetry that often lends a kind of theatrical glamour to the deeds of some of his contemporaries, but his subtlety is obvious to the observant.

"The one great unmistakable chance of the game was that which went the way of Penman, the Luton centre-forward. He stood alone in the six-yards' radius with the ball stationary at his feet. It was a situation that called for a great effort, and Penman succeeded in accomplishing a remarkable thing—he put the ball above the crossbar. Given the same position a hundred times in succession, none but a foot juggler could have got the ball so far away from its mark.

"Lindsay had more likely shots to stop than Fryer, but either custodian gave the spectators a little of their best. We all know Fryer, so it merely remains to be said that, in Lindsay, Luton has a player whose actions are marked by the soundest of judgment, and a goalkeeper whose skill will carry them through many trying periods. McEwen and Turner played well at back, yet as a defence we preferred the Fulham trio to the very capable Luton rearguard.

"A draw was a fitting result to the splendid endeavours of either side, for it would have been a pity to have seen a smudge of defeat upon the escutcheon of men who had played so cleverly. No goals were scored, and everybody was satisfied."

"Daily News":—"As was the case last season, the brunt of the work falls on the Luton defence, which happily is very strong. Lindsay in goal is above the average goalie, and acquitted himself like a master. At back, Fulham supporters had the pleasure of seeing their old friend Turner, who was with them last year, and he treated them to one of his best exhibitions. McEwen was the same fearless Mac of old. In addition to repeatedly breaking up the Fulham attacks, R. Hawkes was the only Luton man who gave Fryer any serious trouble. Barnes is the pick of the forward rank, which needs strengthening if Luton are to maintain their position in the League."

"Morning Leader":—"Luton have just signed on Prichard, a young player from Motherwell, who will fill a place in the intermediate division when occasion requires. The Strawplaiters cannot always depend upon Bob

Hawkes, by the way, and it is unfortunate for them that they cannot. The amateur was in splendid form against the clever Fulham forwards, and his display was a distinct feature of the game.

"I do not want to analyse nor draw conclusions that may discourage our noble friends, the Strawplaiters, but if they will permit me to say so, their milk contains rather too much water. In other words, they are all powerful in defence and weak in attack. Their goalkeeper, Lindsay—a familiar name in Luton's defence, by the way—is a real treasure. He was understudy to Doig at Sunderland for two seasons, and Lindsay is not all arms and legs. You cannot call him 'fireworks.' He takes the big ball with the ease of a wicketkeeper who stands up to a slow bowler, and he returns it to the field with the same unconcern. He is never flurried, nor is he caught unawares, and in this particular match Lindsay showed that intelligent anticipation which is half the battle. Then there is McEwen at left back. Judge a man by the nature of the opposition against him, and McEwen was the first defender on the field. You see him with his hands on his hips dancing about like one who knows that sooner or later the ball must come to him. In sheer desperation, sometimes, he goes for the ball, and on one occasion he was bowled over; nothing to be wondered at when a man of his inches goes full tilt at a solid accumulation like Wardrope. Nor must we overlook Turner, who is less anticipatory than McEwen, but a back who clears the way. The finest of them all was Bob Hawkes, who is worth two men in any half-back line."

The Portsmouth "Football Mail" publishes an interview with Thompson, Pompey's new custodian. Thompson, in the course of his remarks, says it was on the suggestion of McEwen that he came to Luton last season, and he did not suppose he should have come South at all if it had not been for Mac. Then follow these interesting remarks:—

"What did you think of Portsmouth when you met them last season?"

"Well," Thompson replied, after a second's thought, "Pompey shaped well against us at Luton. In fact, they should have won on the day's play. But McEwen is a grand back, and a fine captain, and our defence managed to stave off defeat."

"I may assume, I suppose, that McEwen is one of the best backs you have ever played behind?"

"Yes," said Thompson, "there's no doubt about that. For a player of his inches he is a marvel."

And so say all of us.