

The Southern League.

LUTON v. MILLWALL.

Played at Millwall on Saturday. Result:—

Millwall 2 goals.

Luton nil.

The teams were as follow:—

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

Millwall—Joyce; McLaren and Stevenson; Proudfoot, McLean, and Blythe; Bradbury, Calvey, J. H. Gettins, Watkins, and Hunter.

Referee, Mr. F. Kirkham (Preston).

Unlike the old-time visits to Millwall, when it was a fight for the championship, last Saturday's match was a desperate struggle to escape from the lowest position but one on the table. For the sixth time in away matches, the Luton players failed to find the net, and it must be a record in the history of the Club to stand with a complete blank in the credit column of their goal record after three months' work on foreign soil. The Luton eleven was constituted as foreshadowed last week, Spencer deciding to turn out after undergoing only a few days' training.

But we had rather a surprise appearance in the Millwall ranks. It is now eleven seasons since Joe Gettins first appeared in a blue shirt against Luton, and he must be getting near the veteran stage. Indeed, not having heard his name before this season, I quite thought he had definitely retired from the game. But so desperate had become the position of affairs at Millwall, it was determined to ask him to once more assist them to beat their oldest rivals for Southern fame, and to the delight of the Dockers' officials he finally consented, although they were not certain of his appearance when we reached the ground.

When the game started there were not more than two thousand spectators present, but probably at the close there were three thousand. It was certainly by far the smallest gate for a Saturday match between the teams at Millwall. McEwen won the toss, but no particular advantage was gained thereby. For the first few minutes I really thought Luton were about to retrieve their character, for they came down in good style several times.

One exceptionally pretty movement was initiated by Ross, who worked the ball through nicely on the left, but could not quite get clear away from the attentions of McLaren, and he cleverly transferred to Eaton. The latter tipped the sphere to Spence, who tried a dropping shot, which caused Joyce to handle in the top corner. But the pace of the shot was not sufficient to force the ball through, and the custodian succeeded in catching beneath the bar and throwing away out of danger. A bit later Eaton again passed the ball towards the centre, and it looked any odds on Spencer getting in another shot, but he was badly fouled, and the resulting place kick was put just over the bar by Turner.

So far, Millwall had not been dangerous at all, but when the game was barely five minutes old a piece of real good fortune presented Gettins with an opening. The ball had been kept in midfield for several seconds, and neither side could really get control of it. After bouncing about among a crowd of players, White touched it to Fred Hawkes, and unfortunately it went off him to Gettins. The Millwall player bolted down the field, but instead of attempting a right-through goal, à la Shanks, he passed the ball on to Calvey, who let drive with a cross attempt which beat Lindsay all the way.

It was a well-worked-for point after Gettins so luckily settled on the ball, and naturally the home crowd were highly delighted. But it meant an uphill task for Luton, as in so many games this season. Several times this year have our opponents got such a point on practically the first occasion they have got anywhere near Lindsay.

Even yet Luton kept up their early pressure, and a good shot from Ross was only just saved by Joyce, but Proudfoot secured and kicked away out of danger. Again the right wing brought the ball through and caused Joyce to run out. Lamberton centred right across to Barnes, who drew well in, but his final shot struck the outside of the net. This was very fortunate for Millwall, as Joyce was clear away from his charge. At the opposite goal Lindsay was called upon once or twice but the attempts were usually from good range, and the Luton custodian was not really hampered. Once Calvey tried to break right through; indeed, he went past the backs, but Bob Hawkes fell behind and robbed him cleverly. At this stage Millwall were certainly having the greater share of the exchanges, Hunter almost converting a nice pass out from Gettins.

Luton soon recovered, however, and Barnes forced his way down the left wing, but his pass was badly missed by Eaton, who was well placed. A minute later Bob Hawkes tried one of his specials, but had the misfortune to hit the post. The attempt quite deceived Joyce, who thought the ball was clear and allowed it to travel over for a goal kick. The referee by no means favoured Luton in his offside decisions. Once Barnes was given offside when at least four Millwall players were between him and Joyce, while a bit later Spencer was at least two yards on the right side of both backs when he passed out to Eaton, who was well placed, but Mr. Kirkham blew his whistle before Sammy could get in his shot. I suppose he thought he would get the ball in the net for once at least, for he let drive with a shot which Joyce could not get at.

Proudfoot badly fouled Spencer just outside the penalty area, and Bob Hawkes was entrusted with the place kick. He put nicely among a crowd of players, but it could not be forced through. During the scrimmage Lamberton was fouled, of course, well inside the fatal line, but the referee apparently failed to notice the infringement and the danger passed. Again Bob Hawkes tried a shot from thirty yards' range, only missing by inches. It now wanted not more than five minutes to half-time, and Luton tried desperately to equalise matters.

A corner was forced off McLaren and put behind, and White attempted to increase his goal record with a good shot, but Joyce was equal to the occasion and saved finely. Just on half-time the Millwall goalkeeper fairly "brought down the house" with a brilliant save right on the line from a clever shot from Eaton. It looked a certain equaliser, but Joyce got down to it in a miraculous way.

I have little doubt if this goal had been netted I should have a very different tale to unfold, but hard luck seems to dog Luton's progress this season, and the teams retired with Millwall's early goal standing alone on the score-sheet. Right away from the re-start Luton forced the game, and Barnes shot in from a difficult angle, but Joyce got to the ball near the extreme post and saved. At the opposite end Olvey was presented with a glorious opening, but he sent the ball well over the crossbar. Hereabouts Millwall were again putting on full steam, but they were by no means correct in their target practice, and the Luton defence were always able to prevent an increase of the score until a most unlucky incident happened.

Bradbury and White were engaged in a tussle for the ball near the corner flag, and ultimately the ball cannoned off White over the goal line. The corner was well placed, and during the melee Gettins let drive, but the ball struck Eaton on the elbow, and without a moment's hesitation the referee signalled a penalty. It was a real surprise ruling, even to the Millwall players. Indeed, Gettins, who was certainly the best judge of the incident, expressed his decided opinion that it was no penalty quite openly, and was called to order by Mr. Kirkham for so doing, the official claiming that he was the person who should say if it was a penalty or not.

Watkins made no mistake with the shot, and this goal quite settled Luton's chances of final victory. Lindsay was kept fairly busy from this stage, for the heart had been taken out of the attack, and Millwall kept the ball pretty much in the Luton half. McEwen did his utmost to encourage his comrades, and just before the close the Luton forwards forced the game to the opposite goal. Joyce ran well out to reach the ball, but failed to gather it, and Eaton was given another chance to notch that goal the team have been out so many times for, but Stevenson had fallen behind, and it struck him instead of finding its proper place in the net.

On the whole, Millwall probably deserved to win, but it was not until the unfortunate penalty

was netted that they fully asserted their superiority, and without a doubt the referee's decisions helped them to earn the two points. Lindsay did well between the uprights, especially in the closing stages, while Turner and McEwen gave him considerable assistance; indeed, this trio carried off chief honours. I have seen the intermediate line more effective, although it would be difficult to indicate the exact weakness here, for each player did many good things.

The attack was certainly better balanced than in some recent games, for the right wing was much more in evidence. Still, possibly this was because Barnes and Ross were looked after a bit more. The latter had few chances to increase his goal record, chiefly through the attentions of Proudfoot. Probably most interest will be felt as to the manner in which Spencer shaped in the centre. I am pleased to state it was the generally expressed opinion of Lutonians who made the journey to town that he filled this difficult position with more promise of satisfactorily proving the missing link than anyone else who has figured as pivot this season. He is fairly weighty and possesses a good idea of the game, and with more experience of his comrades' style should help Luton to many a victory.

Tottenham Hotspur, who are to visit Luton on Saturday, accomplished a fine performance on Monday when they beat Plymouth Argyle by 2 goals to nil. The Spurs have not done well, however, this season, but they may always be depended on for a good game when opposed to Luton, and it ought to be particularly good on this occasion, as both teams play very much the same style of football. The kick-off is fixed for 2.45.