

The English Cup.

FULHAM v. LUTON.

Played at Fulham on Saturday. Result:—

Fulham 4 goals.

Luton nil.

The teams were as follow:—

Fulham—Fryer; Ross and Thorpe; Haworth, Gray, and Goldie; Soar, Graham, Fraser, Wardrope, and Lennie.

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

Referee, Mr. A. Milward.

Despite the miserable state of the weather on Saturday—fog in the morning and rain in the afternoon—nearly ten thousand people visited the Craven Cottage ground to see the Cup-tie game between Fulham and Luton. Had the atmospheric conditions been more favourable, the probability is that the number of spectators would have been pretty well doubled.

The playing pitch was in very fair condition, but the surface was in a slippery state, and the going was all against the Luton light weights. That fact was appreciated at the outset, but no one quite expected to see the visitors so hopelessly outclassed as they undoubtedly were. Many of them could do nothing right, whereas the Londoners seemed to revel in their work, and once they obtained the lead they never looked back.

In the opening stages, there did appear a prospect of a fairly good game, the exchanges being tolerably even. Luton's overtures were chiefly made on the left wing, but Barnes and Ross made the mistake of attempting too much in the short passing line, and were consequently knocked off their perch by the dashing tactics of their burly opponents. Ross, too, was soon disheartened by the lack of assistance he got from his centre-forward.

Luton started with a little advantage by reason of McEwen winning the toss, but Fulham were the first to get away, and a very bad miss by Turner nearly brought about a disaster at the start. Owing to the right back's failure, Lindsay ran out to kick away, and, Fraser dashing up at the same time, the ball rebounded off him. We were all expecting to see it go through the open goal, but fortunately it went over.

A foul against Fred Hawkes for jumping gave the homesters another chance, but Lindsay cleared, and a good kick by McEwen compelled Thorpe to pass back to Fryer, who had some difficulty in clearing owing to a rush by Lamberton. Luton had one or two openings after this but there was too much twisting and turning, and the efforts were easily frustrated by the homesters, who again attacked, Lennie sending in a brilliant shot, which Lindsay safely negotiated.

Lamberton and Ross were conspicuous for very good attempts, and Bob Hawkes was going away nicely when he was fouled. Nothing came of this or another free kick, but hopes were raised when Ross accepted a clear pass from Barnes. The greasy ball, however slipped off his foot when he essayed a shot. Then White foolishly gave a free kick for a foul in the Luton half, and Goldie placing, Wardrope headed through.

Luton fell away considerably after this, or perhaps it was that Fulham went about their work with increased zest, and the visitors' chances of getting on level terms again were few and far between. The Londoners were certainly very pressing in their attentions, and had it not been for the indefatigable work of McEwen at back, the result no doubt would have been a good deal worse than it was. Luton had a hard matter to clear from a couple of corners, and then at the other end Ross did get near the mark with a shot that struck the upright.

A foul by Bob Hawkes just outside the penalty line looked dangerous, but did not prove so difficult to deal with as another free kick given by White, a shot from Lennie finding its way across the mouth of the goal and looking for all the world as though it were going through. It was near half-time when Fulham's second goal came, and then it was as the result of some ludicrous play on the part of Luton.

Fred Hawkes headed away well from a centre by Soar, but Fulham returned to the attack, and several Luton men in trying to clear from another centre, got mixed up right in the mouth of goal. For a time they had it all to themselves, but of course the Fulham forwards were soon on the spot, and in the end Fred Hawkes gave a penalty by handling the ball, this being the only means of saving the goal.

Ross, Fulham's right back, took the kick and scored, the homesters thus crossing over with a comfortable lead of two goals. In the second half Luton showed to even less advantage than in the first. In the first minute or two the Luton defence was at fault, and Lindsay rushing out to meet Soar, the latter got to the ball first, and tapping it across to Lennie, that player just tapped it into an empty goal.

Once only did Luton come near improving their position, and that was just after Bob Hawkes had tested Fryer with a fast grounder. Eaton, getting an opening, put in a hot shot which quite beat the big custodian, but, as luck would have it, the ball struck the inside of the bar and rebounded to Lamberton, who shot wide. Fulham's last goal was scored by Fraser, and it was the best of the match.

On the play, Fulham fully merited their victory, for though Luton held their own in the first part of the proceedings, they were the inferior team after a goal had been scored against them, and were beaten to the world when the penalty was converted. The Londoners played a strong game, probably as a result of Luton's weakness, but they certainly seemed better balanced than last season, when Luton, perhaps, were a little unlucky to lose by three goals to nil.

Fryer was not much tested, both the men in front of him playing extremely well. The halves were also in good fettle, and forward Lennie and Fraser were the shining lights, though Soar, who was off the field some time in the second half through an injury, was also in pretty good form.

On the Luton side there were three men who stood out head and shoulders above the rest. They were McEwen, Bob Hawkes, and Ross. Lindsay was certainly not at his best in goal, and Turner was unreliable at back. Fred Hawkes did fairly well, but White suffered badly through attempting too much, and though he performed with the best intentions, his passes several times went to the advantage of the other side. Ross and Barnes made some good efforts, but, as already stated, played much too close a game to be successful under the circumstances; the right wing was only middling, and the centre man was a passenger all the way.

But I am not disposed to blame the team so much as the directors, who, from a playing point of view, would be doing the Club a very good turn if they were to take a month's holiday. All along they have seemed to show an extraordinary faculty for doing the wrong thing, either by persisting in playing the wrong men or putting the right men in the wrong places.

When at last, after much tribulation, they determined upon the experiment of playing Bob Hawkes in the forward line, they threw away all chance of success by carrying out the remarkable notion that Lamberton, who had been playing as well inside as Ross, should be relegated to the outside position. Bob did his level best, but had no one to help him, and one could scarcely be surprised at his desire to get back to his old place.

The best line that could have been made with the men at command was with Eaton or someone else outside-right, Bob Hawkes inside, Lamberton centre, and the left wing as at present. But that was never tried, and I am afraid it is too late to think of it now. Lamberton never was an outside man, and it is a shame that a good player should be spoiled by being kept in a position for which he shows no aptitude.

It is said that at half-time on Saturday, McEwen was in favour of bringing Lamberton to the centre and transferring Spencer to the outside, but a majority of the directors on the spot were opposed to it, and so the only chance of saving the game was thrown away. I don't say it was a great chance, but it was the only one, such as it was, and if the skipper made the suggestion, it ought to have been acted upon.