

Football Notes and News.

By "Grasshopper."

ENGLISH CUP COMPETITION.

LUTON v. FULHAM.

Luton were crushingly defeated on Saturday, and—yes, I feel I must say it—they were disgraced into the bargain. Such a defeat was beyond anticipation, and yet when one comes to seriously think of it, the result is not quite so unsatisfactory—that is from the point of view of goals scored against us—as it might have been. Of course it has to be admitted that 4-0 is a piece of big scoring, but what Luton onlookers expected, as the game proceeded was that we should get beaten by at least half-a-dozen. As things are at present, we have not got many Mark Tapleys amongst local football supporters, and there were few optimistic enough to imagine that we were going to win; but there was the possibility of a draw, or at the worst, defeat by an odd goal or so.

'Four-nil!' It is a sorry result, after what we were able to accomplish last year, and even during the early stages of this season, when we drew at Craven Cottage 0-0.

I went—in fact some 250 of us went—to Craven Cottage on Saturday to see Luton make a stand against the River team. We braved the elements and the inconvenient journey, but the game. Och! Those who kept at home did not miss much.

A drizzling rain was falling when the teams took the field. Fulham came out first, quickly followed by the Blues. It was only too apparent then which was the best team. The home men were in spanking condition, and though we all heartily cheered our favourites when they came to make their bow to the 5,000 spectators, we were conscious of their inequality.

The teams lined out as follows:—

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

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

Mr. Millward had charge of the whistle.

One matter of uncertainty was as to how the Cottagers' quintette would shape. We knew their forwards had been rather weak this season, a fact borne out by their scarcity of goals. But, on the other hand, their defence has been strong, which is proved by the fact that of the six Southern League clubs that have visited their ground, New Brompton alone could claim to have penetrated the Fulham defence. Although we did not expect a great deal from our forwards, these little points aroused just a little interest.

McEwen won the toss, and decided to take advantage of the strong wind. The opening stages were very even. Luton were playing quite as well, if not better than, their opponents, and everything promised a good game. Our left wing, particularly, was doing some good work. Luton's end was early visited by Lennie and Graham, but McEwen and Turner ably defended. At the other end, from a free kick, Ross hit the cross-bar. This was inspiring. Fulham returned to the attack, but failed to get through. It was a case of battle-dore and shuttlecock for some time. Eventually Fraser got through, but was fouled. Goldie took the shot; he lifted the ball well over the heads of the players, and Wardrope headed into the net.

It was one of the softest goals I have seen obtained. The shot was an extremely tame one, but Lindsay made not the slightest attempt to save. It was a bad piece of work altogether.

Luton kept up their attack, but meeting with such a stubborn defence they began to show signs of deterioration. The visitors' goal was several times in imminent danger, and the lion's share of the work fell to McEwen. Barnes and Ross relieved, and the latter put in a splendid shot. Fulham's halves were, however, playing such a bustling game that our forwards were able to do but little.

Vigorously pressing, the home forwards beat Turner; Freddy Hawkes got round, and in trying to clear handled the ball. Ross, the Fulham back, scored from the penalty. This apparently sealed Luton's doom, and one could almost imagine that they knew it.

From now up to half-time Luton gave but a poor account of themselves. The second half, too, was painful to watch. There was only one team in it, and that was Fulham. No doubt the sodden ground was telling on Luton to some extent, but even that could not have accounted for so ineffective a display.

The homesters also obtained their third goal rather simply. Graham went right through; Lindsay came out, but he must have misjudged the ball, because he went beyond it. Lennie smartly breasted through an open goal. Towards the close Fulham were round Lindsay like a swarm of bees, and Fraser put on their fourth and final goal. So Luton's defeat was complete.

With regard to our own team, the great weakness lay in our centre forward. Luton requires a playing centre, and it is useless to attempt to hide it from ourselves.

It was a common query—sarcastic, of course—for the Fulham spectators to make: "Why haven't you brought your right wing?" Lambertson and Eaton did not get on very well, though both proved themselves triers. There can also be little fault found with Ross and Barnes; the defence opposed to them was too strong.

The halves played a moderate game, Freddy Hawkes being perhaps one of the most prominent. To the spectator "Bob" played a fine game. It was at times pretty to watch, but that was nearly all. It is a pity, but true nevertheless, that Bob makes the mistake of wandering too far after the ball. This is due, no doubt, to his desire to be always at it. It puts, however, a great strain on McEwen, and by Soar "Mac" was on Saturday severely tested. Once I noticed he was so completely beaten that the Luton skipper scarcely attempted to go back. Fortunately Soar let the leather go out. "Mac," all the same, played his utmost. Turner was rather weak, and I wonder what would happen to him if Freddy Hawkes ran all over the field. I should have said that White was fair, but he was not always able to break up the combination of the Cottagers' forwards. Neither goalkeeper had many shots to deal with, but had Lindsay been in his usual form, he must have saved at least two of the goals.
