

SOUTHERN LEAGUE.

LUTON v. FULHAM.

A SURPRISING VICTORY.

'Twas a glorious victory! Yes, as famous a victory as has probably ever occurred in the history of Southern League football. No more surprising event in the way of scoring took place in the Southern League tourney on Saturday than the defeat of Fulham at Luton. Six—nothing! One had to rub one's eyes before believing it was really an accomplished fact. It is easy to understand the consternation of the people at Craven Cottage, when the news was flashed over the wires; and there was more than one telegram "repeated," to ascertain if there was not an error in the message.

Luton's own supporters were, however, as much surprised at the result as anybody, and the achievement of the Blues was on everybody's lips on Saturday night. The most sanguine hoped for nothing better than a draw, and no one would have been dissatisfied if Luton had secured but one point. Yet two points were obtained, and a nice addition to the goal average into the bargain, as well as an advance in the League table.

Fulham came from Matlock, where they had been in training for nearly a week, in preparation for their Cup-tie engagement with Manchester United. With the exception that Bell was played in place of Lennie, the visitors came on the field with their best team—the same eleven that defeated the Spurs the previous week. Encouraged by their two recent victories over Tottenham, the visitors took the field with confidence. Luton played their usual team, and it is pleasing to see that at last we have settled down, and that there are not likely to be any more alterations, which so often cause havoc with a team's prospects.

"Mac" won the toss, and set Fulham to defend the railway goal. The advantage of the slight incline was more than nonplussed by the strong rays of the sun. The turf was in as fine a condition as it has been this season. Mr. J. W. Bailey, of Leicester, had charge of the whistle, and Fraser kicked off well within time.

The visitors were the first to show a determined attack, Graham and Wardrope putting in a nice piece of work; McEwen, however, relieved, and Barnes, being put in possession, quickly transferred play. Fulham's attack, it is interesting to note, only lasted about a couple of minutes, and they scarcely attacked afterwards during the whole game; certainly they were at no time really dangerous.

Barnes, who brought relief so early, made a splendid run down the field and gave Ross a good chance, but the inside right missed badly. A determined attack followed on the visitors' citadel, and it at length fell to Lamberton, who received from Ross, and placed high in the net. Needless to say, this happy piece of work was received with great cheering.

From the kick-off, play became slightly in favour of the visitors, but their forwards were unable to get through; and Barnes made another individual run, putting across a very nice centre, and enabling Eaton to securely place in the net. Two goals in about ten minutes was really splendid, and scarcely anything could hold the enthusiasm of the crowd.

Still keeping up a brisk attack, Luton obtained a third goal through Lamberton. We had three goals besides hitting the post once or twice, all in less than 20 minutes, and were still going hard.

Then Fraser and Graham got away, but "Mac" was not long in pulling up Soar, and down the field again came the ball. Luton was given a penalty, but Bob Hawkes missed, Fryer easily diverting the course of the ball. However, Ross scored a splendid goal shortly before half-time. Four goals up before half-time was a fine piece of work, while all the same it was clear that the visitors could not do much against our backs.

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When Luton turned out for the second half, there had to be a re-arrangement of their forward line, owing to injuries. Ross took the centre position, but Lamberton and Moody were not at all in sound condition, with the result that for a time Luton were playing nine men.

Despite the alterations in the team, the homesters soon opened a vigorous attack, three corners falling to them in quick succession. Play continued to be all in favour of Luton. Ross soon put on goal No. 5 from a pass by Eaton. The result was so assured that little interest was taken in the game, excepting from the point of view—if one may be pardoned for using a slang phrase—of "rubbing it in."

Then the visitors made a sort of an attack, but they met with a stubborn defence, and Luton not only returned to the attack, but scored a sixth goal through Eaton, after Fryer had partially cleared from Lamberton. Fulham made another combined effort towards the close, but Luton succeeded in keeping their goal intact.

It was a magnificent triumph for Luton; in fact, there was only one team in it, and the marvel was not that we scored six goals, but that we did not get a few more. The Blues never played a finer game. Certainly no match played on the Bury Park for the last two seasons has surpassed it either for dash, combination, or sound play. The secret of our success, I am inclined to think, lay with our forwards. They played with great confidence, moved along the field like clockwork, and scarcely ever missed an opportunity of shooting. Their dash completely upset the Fulham defence, and both Thorpe and Ross soon had quite enough of it.

A difficulty presents itself in the selection of individual players for criticism. All did so well that to single any one out seems superfluous. A word to two must, however, be said about Ted Turner. I very much doubt if he ever gave a finer display at back than he did on Saturday afternoon, and the crowd were not long in recognising it. Our right back never made one mistake, and his kicking was so sure and sound in judgment that it agreeably surprised not a few. All one need say about "Mac" is that he is still at his best.

That was really the second cause of Luton's success—its defence. Both backs played a grand game, and would have defeated almost any combination brought against it. If Luton could reproduce Saturday's form in the future, we should indeed do well. The other week I remarked that the chief characteristic of our premier team was inconsistency, and here is another striking illustration of the truth of that remark. In the Cup-tie, Fulham beat us 4-0, we beat Northampton 4-2, lose to Wellingborough 2-0, and here pile up six clear goals against our old rivals.

Probably Fryer never had so many shots to deal with in one match as he had on Saturday. He tried his best, but Luton's were all splendidly obtained goals, and the Fulham custodian never had a chance at saving. The visitors were completely demoralised, and were so sick of matters that for a while, in the second half, they played the one back game. Soar, whom they generally class as their most formidable forward, was completely bottled up by McEwen. What a contrast to the Cup-tie game at Craven Cottage.

The result must have come as a rude shock to Fulham. Their defeat cannot be explained by the theory that they were saving themselves for their Cup-tie "tussle." As a matter of fact they played their best almost from beginning to end, but they happened to find Luton "on song." Play was so fast that it was no surprise to see most of the men "winded" early in the second half. No doubt the visitors meant to avoid the risk of injury, but that in itself does not explain their defeat, and we can take off our hats to Luton, who so brilliantly wiped off an old score.

I am afraid Fulham will stand but a poor chance at Cottonopolis, but all the same heartily wish them success. Let us hope they will be in form on Saturday. There are remarkable vagaries even in football, and for Fulham may —(?)