

The Southern League.

SOUTHAMPTON v. LUTON.

Played at Southampton on Saturday.
Result:—

Southampton	4 goals
Luton	1 goal

The teams were as follow:—

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

Southampton—Byrne; Benson and Molyneux; Lea, Dainty, and Houlker; Webb, Bluff, Hedley, Fraser, and Mouncher.

Referee, Mr. A. G. Hines (Nottingham).

Points are extremely difficult for visiting teams to obtain at the Dell; indeed, the one secured there on the opening day of last season represents Luton's total since their return to the Southern League. With the exception of Clawley, both teams were as selected, and consequently were presumably the best at the disposal of the two clubs. A sudden attack of influenza was the cause of the home goalkeeper's absence.

Molyneux won the toss and naturally took what advantage the elements gave, but the day was almost an ideal one from a football point of view, and little help came from the wind. Almost immediately after the kick-off Bob Hawkes gave the home spectators the "jumps" with a hot shot which almost entered the net. Byrne certainly stopped it, but could not hold the ball, and if a Lutonian had been up in all probability the opening goal would have been netted.

Whatever hope of a victory because of weakness between the uprights this incident raised in the breasts of the Luton players, quickly fled, for within four minutes McEwen was judged guilty of handling the ball within the penalty area. He must have formed his intention very quickly, for Dainty, who took the shot, was within a yard or so of the Luton captain, and the ball really cannoned on to Mac's arm. It was distinctly unlucky, and would not be given a penalty ninety-nine times out of a hundred.

The crowd, to their credit, did not go in for hysterics over the award, and were content with a mild cheer when Houlker beat Lindsay. Notwithstanding this unfortunate occurrence, the Luton attack quite held its own, and a couple of corners were quickly forced without anything tangible resulting. The ball was worked from end to end, both attacks being seen to advantage. Fraser, however, made a sad mess of a nice pass from his partner by placing yards over when in a good position for scoring.

Once or twice during the first quarter of an hour did Eaton and Barnes get through and drop in a promising centre, and it was off one such from the former that Moody equalised the score after fifteen minutes' play. It was a clever goal, Moody having to practically pounce upon the ball as Benson was about to kick it away. But the Luton forward kept his head finely, and, although closely attended by the home backs, he put in a grand shot well out of Byrne's reach.

Soon afterwards Bob Hawkes tried one of his best, which, however, was punted over by Byrne at the expense of a corner, but this was not improved upon. The home spectators passed through many anxious moments hereabouts, for Benson and Molyneux were kept hard at work defending, and it was seldom the Saints' forwards got away.

But eventually they did so. Webb getting through on the right, planted the ball in the centre near Dainty, and he put it to Bluff, who was better placed. The latter let drive, and the ball passed into the net, although it appeared to touch either White or Turner, for it went through at a different angle than appeared probable from the position Bluff shot from. Thus Southampton took the lead for the second time after half-an-hour's play.

Several times immediately afterwards the home forwards appeared likely to increase the lead. Lindsay bringing off at least two saves from shots at close quarters which might have reasonably been expected to score, while again Webb got the better of McEwen and came away quite on his own, but he did not turn the opportunity to advantage. He put the ball across the goal-mouth, but it went out on the opposite side. However, the forcing tactics of the Saints' vanguard was not to be without its reward, for, following some exceptionally clever work on the part of the inside forward trio, Hedley made the score 3-1 with what proved to be the best goal of the day. It was practically unstoppable, and hit the back of the net like a shot from a gun.

From this point to the interval Luton had a turn of attacking. Two corners were awarded after considerable pressure, but the situation was eventually relieved by Eaton placing the second behind. Just before the interval the play was still in the vicinity of Byrne, and Barnes, who had drawn towards the goal, was given a chance to reduce the margin, but he could not sufficiently control the ball, and it travelled over the goal-line wide of the uprights instead of finding its lodging place in the net.

In the second half, Luton more than held their own, and still another corner was forced, but Barnes again placed behind. Quite early in this half Ross came through cleverly, while Eaton held off Houliker, but Dave just failed to direct the ball properly—a very lucky escape for the Saints. Indeed, at this point there were several such incidents, the ball being sent in towards the Southampton goal, but time after time Byrne and Molynaux proved equal to the pressure, until at last the ball went over the line and a goal kick was awarded.

Once Barnes did find the net from a pass by Eaton, but he was just offside, and no goal resulted. The game was stopped for two or three minutes through Lamberton getting hurt, but he did not leave the field and apparently was not handicapped by the accident. The Saints had better luck at the opposite goal when a fine drive from Hedley was magnificently stopped almost on the line by Lindsay. The custodian fell in-saving, and just managed to touch the ball to Turner, who kicked away. But the relief was only temporary, for before Lindsay could recover his position Bluff had got in a return shot, making the fourth goal for Southampton.

A bit later an almost similar shot to that of Hedley's was put in by Lamberton, and Byrne just managed to drop on the ball by the side of the post. He could not get it away, but managed to turn it round the upright at a second attempt, and thus was more in luck's way than Lindsay, having plenty of time to recover before the shot was put back. Barnes, in forcing his way through, was fouled by Lee, but it would have served Luton better if the referee had ignored the offence, for Barnes was practically free when the whistle went.

However the place-kick was got away, and thus the sinners enjoyed the advantage. Once more did Luton appear dangerous when Eaton dropped across a nice m'ville to Lamberton's toe, but Byrne got to the shot from Luton's centre-forward, and still another unfruitful corner resulted.

The result was most disappointing after the magnificent form of the whole Luton side. They have not played a better game this season, but their luck was dead out. While I would admit the Saints were a shade the better side, a single-goal victory was even more than they deserved on the play. It was a treat to watch the clever movements coming from both sides right through the piece, while it was also a pleasure to see such a game practically free from fouls. I do not remember half-a-dozen throughout the game.

Lindsay kept a good goal, while McEwen and Turner, although hard-worked at times, played well at back. Possibly the halves were not seen to such advantage as in some matches, but they were meeting almost, if not quite, the cleverest string of forwards in the League. Bob Hawkes was the most prominent, chiefly because he varied the play by putting in a bit of attacking on his own; indeed, he had decidedly hard lines two or three times in not notching a goal.

Forward, the left wing were the cleverer pair, and Moody was equal to any forward on the field, both for individual work and providing opportunities for his comrades. Lamberton, as usual, was much in evidence, and kept his wings together well. Ross was scarcely so successful at inside-right as I have seen him on the opposite wing; still he played a clever game, and

several times was a source of considerable anxiety to the home defence. Eaton once or twice suffered from a lack of pace in getting off with the ball as it came out to him near the line, otherwise he did well, especially when it is considered he had not been altogether in the best of health this holiday time.

Where Southampton held the advantage was at half-back, and it would be difficult to pick out the best player in this line, for Houliker and Dainty were quite equal to Lee, who, I notice, has again been picked for the trial games. Molyneux was the better back, Benson being very erratic at times, and scarcely of the class usually associated with Southampton. By keeping the score down to a single goal, Byrne must be said to have been a success, for Clawley could not have saved Moody's shot and might possibly have allowed some others to score.

Among the forwards Bluff was most conspicuous when the goal was endangered, and has improved marvellously since last season, when he was little above the standard of a moderate soldier team. He is quite on the small side, but with two stalwarts like Hedley and Fraser making up the inside forward rank, the attack appears to be able to carry a little one without weakening its effectiveness. Mouncher proved the stronger winger, Webb only occasionally getting the better of McEwen.

The great surprise of the other League matches was the defeat of Watford at home by Millwall. Not since the middle of October had Watford tasted defeat, they had been creating surprise after surprise in their away matches, and then when they had got what appeared to be a soft thing on at home, they allowed themselves to be beaten. And it was no fluke either, for Millwall won fairly and squarely on their merits.

Fulham, who are to visit Luton on Saturday next entertained and vanquished Tottenham, though it was only by a goal to nil, but Reading performed in something like sensational style, beating Portsmouth by 5 goals to nil. At Wellingborough, Swindon won a lucky victory by a goal to nothing.

The following is the League table up to date:

					Goals.		
	Pld.	Wn.	Dr.	Lt.	For.	Agst.	P.
Bristol Rovers	17	11	4	2	35	12	26
Reading	16	12	1	3	34	15	25
Southampton	17	10	5	2	29	17	25
Portsmouth	16	9	1	6	35	31	19
New Brompton	18	6	7	5	26	21	19
Tottenham Hotspur	18	6	6	6	27	30	18
Northampton	16	8	1	7	22	26	17
Plymouth Argyle	17	7	3	7	27	24	17
Queen's Park Rangers	16	6	3	7	24	28	15
Fulham	16	5	5	6	12	15	15
West Ham United	18	5	5	8	18	20	15
Brighton and Hove	15	5	4	6	21	14	14
Watford	13	5	3	5	14	12	13
Brentford	16	6	3	8	17	18	13
Swindon	17	6	1	10	21	30	13
Luton	18	5	3	10	17	30	13
Millwall	18	4	4	10	13	27	12
Wellingborough	16	4	1	11	13	45	9

On Saturday next Luton will entertain their old friends, Fulham, and hope on this occasion to obtain some satisfaction for past humiliations inflicted by the Londoners. But they will need to be on their best behaviour, for Fulham are going very strong just now. On Monday they beat Tottenham Hotspur by 5 goals to nil—a considerable improvement on their Saturday's performance—and as they are in strict training for the Cup tie, we shall probably see them right at the top of their form.

Nevertheless, if Luton play as well as they did last week at Southampton, Luton will win. Supporters of the home club must bear in mind that in spite of the score against them, Luton really played a grand game against the Saints, and they are deserving of every encouragement when they turn out on Saturday next. Let there be a big crowd, then, and plenty of enthusiasm.

Watford were very pleased with their win at Luton last week, although it was only in the S.E.I. The "Watford Observer" says:—"For the first time since they had been a professional club Watford succeeded, on Tuesday, in beating the Strawplaiters at Luton. McCartney scored the only goal of the match with a straight drive which crashed into the top of the net. Lindsay, the home goalkeeper, made two or three sensational saves, the most notable being when he threw himself full length at a ground shot from Tennant and with a mighty effort turned the course of a fast ball.

"It is good to win any match, but it is doubly sweet to Watford to triumph at Luton, where they have experienced repeated reverses. Not since the memorable Cup tie, about six years ago, when Hare scored twice, have the Cassio-road men been able to hold the Luton team at Luton. The truth is that in the past the Bedfordshire Club have always had the better side, but now, as the League table and Tuesday's match demonstrates, they are a peg behind their rivals. The Luton forwards are too light, and McEwen has not a strong partner."