

The Southern League.

LUTON v. WATFORD.

Played at Watford on Good Friday. Result:

Watford	3 goals.
Luton	nil.

The teams were as follow:—

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

Watford—Biggar; Cother and Brooks; Badenoch, McCartney, and Richardson; Matt Broughton, Goodall, Eames, Turner, and Tennant.

Referee, Mr. Bailey (Leicester).

If there were any doubt as to the enthusiasm for football which prevails in Luton, the scene at the station on Good Friday would have speedily dispelled it. The crowds taking advantage of the cheap excursion to Watford was of such a dimension as to necessitate extra trains being put on, and at the intermediate stations the platforms were crowded with prospective spectators.

The weather was far from favourable, rain falling slightly about an hour before the match, but this fact did not prevent the spectators turning up in force, and there would be fully 7,000 present when the ball was set in motion. The Luton crowd made their presence known, cries of "Play up the lads in blue" and "Good old Luton" resounding from all parts of the field.

This, however, was at the start, and unfortunately did not bring about the result hoped for. A defeat of three goals to nil needs some explanation, and to say that this result was not a good criterion of the game would hardly be a fair description. If I were asked to give a reason for Luton's defeat, I should ascribe it to three things. Firstly, from a Watford standpoint, the game was won by Biggar in goal. Secondly, Luton's forwards were not heavy enough, and thirdly, the luck from start to finish was with Watford.

In stating this, I do not desire to decry Watford's victory. They played hard and were fully entitled to their win, though I should imagine the most ardent partisan of their team would admit that on Friday's form they were nothing like three goals better than Luton.

The game was in many senses a peculiar one. To look at it from a goalkeeper's standpoint. Biggar had a day out—he could do nothing wrong; whilst Lindsay was just as unlucky. Biggar, I should say, stepped from twenty to thirty shots, and though he played a great game, he was on more than one occasion extremely lucky to keep the ball out. To quote an old description, wherever the ball happened to be there was Biggar.

On the other hand, Lindsay was not called upon to save more than eight good shots, and yet three went through. One of these was a penalty, and the other two were shots which nine times out of ten would beat the best goalkeeper.

The first quarter of the game was contested at a ding-dong pace, and it was evident from the start that Watford were not going to allow Luton to get the much coveted two points if they could prevent it. Play had not been in progress more than five minutes when Barnes received a nasty kick from Cother which crippled him throughout the game, so that Luton practically played with four forwards.

The opening stages were fairly even, though Eames ought to have put his side ahead early on, as he had an excellent opportunity about five yards away from goal. Soon after this incident Turner, of Watford, had to retire, but he was not absent for long. The first goal came after twenty minutes' play. Goodall gave Eames a nice pass close in, but the centre heeled the ball to Tennant, who sent in a grand shot. Lindsay threw himself full length at the ball, but failed to secure it, and a great shout went up as the Watford players crowded around Tennant to shake his hand.

Luton pressed strongly after this reverse, but were greatly handicapped by Barnes being lame. A splendid opportunity was lost through some misunderstanding between Bob Hawkes and White, when the Watford goal was practically at their mercy. After penning in the home side for a few minutes, without wresting anything tangible, Luton were sent back, and Eames getting possession from the centre line, passed McEwen and came racing down with only Lindsay to beat. The latter rushed out, and, colliding with Eames, brought that player to the ground.

Certainly the fall was the result of a trip, the only question being whether it was accidental or deliberate. Evidently the referee thought the latter, and of course in that case he had no alternative but to award a penalty. McCartney took the kick and made no mistake. Two goals for Watford in 25 minutes' play caused the Luton spectators to maintain a gloomy silence.

Luton for a time pressed strongly, and Biggar was called upon to save a long one which he tipped over the bar. Biggar at this stage showed good custodianship, saving three times in quick succession. One of these, from Ross, was a very good attempt. Shot after shot then rained in upon Biggar, but his bulky form was always in the way.

At the other end Turner caused Tennant to put the ball outside, and he and McEwen repeatedly checked Watford's rushes. The third goal was the result of good work by Johnny Goodall, who was, on the day's play, quite the best forward on the field. After Turner had saved a hot shot in a rather lucky fashion, the ball twisted to Johnny, who sent in a nice shot just out of the reach of Lindsay, and half-time arrived with the score—Watford, 3; Luton, nil.

Watford had much the better of the second half, which was nothing like so interesting as the first moiety. Luton made many desperate rushes, but the Watfordians were now satisfied with the number of goals, and devoted their efforts to keeping the ball out of their goal. "Anywhere will do" shouted the home spectators, and this advice was followed to the letter by the Watford backs, who were not particular where the ball went so long as it was got away.

The Luton forwards at times made desperate rushes, but when they were getting dangerous they were invariably brought to grass by their weightier opponents, who took every advantage of their superior physique. In this connection Badenoch was hooted several times for charging Barnes, and certainly some of his rushes were characterised by a totally unnecessary vigour. There was one incident in the second half which might have given Watford another goal. Lindsay, in saving a shot, almost let the leather slip through his legs, but the opposing forwards were not quick enough to take advantage.

Watford were, of course, highly delighted at their victory. During their association with the League they have beaten Luton on one previous occasion only, so that a little jubilation on their part is not to be wondered at. Their previous victory was in the memorable match when Lindsay figured in the Luton team, and it will be remembered how, owing to his being crooked early in the game, he was unable to do himself justice.

John Goodall, in his report to a London paper, says:—"On the play we deserved our win, although the three-goal margin shows us in a rather too favourable light, but we had at least three physically unsound men on our side. One and all gave a fine exhibition for Watford, notably Biggar, Brooks, Cother, Badenoch, and Broughton. It is indeed hard to understand how Luton come to be in the position of strugglers to retain their place in the Southern League. On their play yesterday they proved themselves a smart all-round combination, with McEwen, Bob Hawkes, and Ross shining lights."