

SOUTHERN LEAGUE.

LUTON v. WEST HAM.

By winning at Boleyn Castle on Saturday, Luton did a little better than the majority of the Southern clubs. During the week there had been a great deal of speculation as to the final result of Luton's encounter with West Ham United; and footballers naturally recalled the drubbing the "Hammers" gave us at Upton Park last season, when they beat us 6-2, and again at Luton by 2-0.

Saturday's result of 2-1 in favour of the visiting side would seem to indicate that Luton are all round an improved team, but it must also be admitted that many critics consider that West Ham are not so strong this year as they were a season or two back.

The following players did duty for their respective sides:—

Luton: Platt; Blackett and McCurdy; F. Hawkes, White, and R. Hawkes; Gallacher, Warner, Brown, Pickering and Barnes.

West Ham: Kitchen; Hammond and Gardner; Bush, Piercy, and Jarvis; Winterhalder, Mackie, Bridgman, Wilkinson and Blackburn.

The conditions were ideal, and West Ham winning the toss, Brown kicked off for Luton, who got away, and Warner was the first to test Kitchen, but the shot was easily cleared. The men soon settled down. Bridgman had a good chance of getting away, but he sent the ball right on to Blackett's toe, and the Luton man speedily returned the sphere. Blackburn gave Wilkinson an opportunity, but the homesters' inside left failed to get past Blackett, and the visitors opened the attack in earnest. A long shot from the touch line spelt danger for the home custodian, but Kitchen just stopped in the nick of time, and got the ball away as Brown became dangerous.

Play was transferred for a moment, but Bridgman, who had a good opening, sent out to Winterhalder, and the latter failing to penetrate the Luton defence, the ball was returned. A vigorous attack ended in the ball being sent behind. The home backs had had a great deal to do, Gardner in particular being hard pressed.

There seemed to be a deal of battledore and shuttlecock about the game, play being frequently transferred from one end to the other. Wilkinson put in a high dropping centre that looked dangerous, but McCurdy cleared with a little difficulty. When the game had been some 20 minutes in progress, Warner opened the scoring for Luton. After some good mid-field play, the visitors' inside right banged the ball into the net, giving Kitchen "not an earthly."

A free kick did not prove of much advantage to the homesters, and the Luton forwards again went away. Gallacher badly missed a pass, Gardner being too quick for him, while Bush, who was put in possession, drove back the Luton attack. From a corner Gallacher headed over the line, and the same player when in a decent position to score missed, but the Luton man was being severely worried by the home left back.

The visitors continued to have the best of the game, and a low shot from Pickering, who missed the post by a few inches, was worthy of note. At the other end Luton were a bit lucky in getting out of danger. Getting away, Blackburn centred, but Mackie missed taking the pass, and McCurdy had not much difficulty in nipping in the bud what to all appearances was intended as a determined attack. The Hammers were having a little hard luck. From a few yards' distance Wilkinson sent in a regular teaser, and I thought Platt was a little fortunate in stopping it.

Pickering once more broke away, but succumbed to Gardner. It was now the Hammers' turn to attack, but the pressure was somewhat relieved by the ball being sent high over the bar. Brown beat the home defence, but shot badly. Blackburn, at the other end, appeared to have a fair opening, but Blackett, ever on the alert, took no risk.

When half-time arrived nothing further had been added to the score, and Luton were thus leading by one goal to love.

On taking the field again it was evident that the Hammers had made up their minds to retrieve their fortune, and the forwards went away with a rush. They, however, found the Luton backs waiting for them. The visitors' defence proved impregnable on that occasion, and back went the ball. Brown obtained possession, and getting by the Hammers' backs, he ended up by safely placing the ball in the net.

From the re-start, on came the Hammers in a body. Bridgman passed to Blackburn, who converted a pretty goal.

This put heart into the homesters, and they made determined attempts to draw level. Gardner, at this stage, was displaying fine form, and had the best of the tussles with the Luton right wing. Bush was well cheered for some clever dribbling, beating three opponents en route. The Hammers once more got away, but were repelled by McCurdy. Back they came, and Blackburn made a grand effort to augment the score with another low shot. At this juncture Sandy Brown was badly jammed between two opponents, and the game had to be stopped for a minute.

Play was resumed again, and Gallacher sent wide. Piercy took the ball from Brown's toes and placed to the left wing, whence it was returned by Blackett. Mackie now brought the ball well up, and placed to Bridgman, who, in turn, gave to Blackburn. The latter, however, was given offside. Blackburn was making great efforts to add to the score, and his shooting was certainly deserving of a goal. Bridgman shot a lovely goal, which was disallowed on the usual score—offside.

Towards the end the "Hammers" certainly had the upper hand of the game, and once or twice came within an ace of scoring. It must be confessed that their luck was out.

Blackburn headed right into Platt's hands. Bridgman was keen on getting a goal, and was ever to be found in the vicinity of Platt, and seemed like scoring, but the ball was deviated by one of the Luton backs. Brown was being well watched, and when Piercy failed Gardner came to the rescue. They were still having bad luck, however. Brown beat Kitchen, but the whistle had previously gone for offside. The Hammers were now playing mostly to the right wing, and consequently little was seen of Blackburn. Winterhalder had now an opportunity, but sent over the line.

Nothing further of a tangible nature occurred, and the game ended:—

LUTON 2 goals

WEST HAM 1 goal

Taking the game through, there there was not a great deal in it, probably Luton were the better team. A draw would not have been a disappointment, but a win over the Hammers has given us a good start, and Luton shares the top position with five other clubs, who for their three matches claim five points each.