

WEST HAM UNITED v. LUTON.

Played at West Ham on Saturday. Results:

Luton 2 goals.

West Ham 1 goal.

The teams were as follow:—

West Ham—Kitchen; Hammond and Gardner; Bush, Piercey, and Jarvis; Winterhalder, Mackie, Bridgeman, Wilkinson, and Blackburn.

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

Referee, Mr. F. Helme.

When Luton went to West Ham last season, there were strong hopes that they would at last embrace the chance of securing a couple of points away from home, for the Hammers had been making a very indifferent show in the League competition. The disappointment, however, was severe, Luton being beaten by six goals to two. This season, the Hammers having a more imposing array of talent at their command, it was recognised that Luton had a very big task in hand, and not many of their supporters were sanguine enough to anticipate a win.

But it is already evident that Luton are a much-improved team, and on Saturday they more than satisfied expectations by bringing off a brilliant victory at the Hammers' expense. Glorious weather favoured the fixture, and the well-appointed ground was crowded with spectators, the attendance numbering from nine to ten thousand persons. There were not a great many Lutonians present, but those who were there soon had a little confidence put into them by the way in which Luton opened the game.

It was the Hammers who won the toss, but it was not they who forced the play. On the contrary, the visitors were quickly in the vicinity of the home goal, and the clever passing which enabled them to keep up the attack elicited the admiration even of those who were longing to see the ball taken to the other end.

In the first minute Kitchen had to clear from Brown, and Gallacher followed on with a good one, whilst directly afterwards a beauty from Sandy went just by the upright. The Hammers broke away for a moment, Winterhalder making the running, but McCurdy cleared, and Luton at once transferred operations, Barnes sending in a long shot which Kitchen could only get rid of at the second attempt. Blackett had hard lines with a free kick, the ball striking the post, and generally Luton were all over their opponents.

Eventually, after about ten minutes' play, White headed to Gallacher, who placed nicely to the front, and Warner scored with a very pretty shot. There is always a good deal of satisfaction about the first goal, for the fact that it takes two to beat it imparts a lot of comfort to the side which has been successful in drawing blood.

Luton continued to have the better of the play, but several free kicks enabled the Hammers to make a little headway, though not to the extent of getting dangerous. The efforts of their forwards were generally nipped in the bud by the Luton halves. Once they made an attack all along the line, but Bush finished up by shooting miles wide.

The visitors then got going again, and might have done some damage, but Warner and Brown, the former particularly, indulged in some unnecessary passing and dribbling, and the opportunities were generally frittered away. Warner's cleverness is too often the means of his own undoing, for he is occasionally tempted to dodge around with the ball, and when he does that it not only throws the forward line out of gear, but enables the opposing defence to get into position to meet the assault.

Pickering, at this juncture, was much the more business-like in his methods, but taken altogether, it may be said that the forwards were not so keen as they had been on pressing their advantages home. The comforting influence of that one goal was probably just sufficient to take the edge off the attack.

Bob Hawkes was cheered by the Lutonian portion of the spectators for heading away a dangerous centre from Blackburn — for Bob never uses his head in this way when it is possible to employ the feet—and Platt cleared well from another attempt by Wilkinson and Blackburn, both of whom should have been given offside, as they were actually midway between Blackett and the custodian when they received the ball.

The Luton goal had another escape when the ball from McCurdy's kick rebounded off Mackie but Platt again saved the situation in splendid style. Blackett afterwards took the ball down the field on his own, and passed to Brown, who, however, shot wide. Just before the interval, West Ham attacked strongly, but Blackett eventually succeeded in clearing, and half-time arrived with Luton leading by a goal to nil.

That they deserved their lead was generally conceded, for on the play they were fully one goal the better team. Their combination was infinitely superior to that of the homesters, and had they not overdone the passing about midway in the first half, they would most likely have improved their position.

The opening of the play in the second half was even more sensational than the first had been, for Luton acted on the aggressive almost immediately, and Barnes forced a corner. This was not turned to account, but Bob Hawkes brought the ball back again to Barnes, who centred, and Brown, seeing an opening, went away at a tangent and scored a magnificent goal, Kitchen having no chance at all.

This was a decidedly promising state of affairs, and the game now looked tolerably safe. Such was not the case, however, for, as matters turned out, Luton had all their work cut out to keep a lead. One goal was very soon rubbed off, but I should say it was a bad one all the way, and the fact that it was bad took a good deal of heart out of the Luton team. After a brief period of give-and-take play, the Hammers went down on the right, and the ball was swung across to Blackburn, who, in my humble opinion, was yards and yards offside. At any rate, he was waiting to receive it, he had all the field to himself, and going for goal, he was able to score with a fine cross shot.

Luton protested against the point being allowed, but to no purpose, and the game now waxed warm and furious. The huge crowd of spectators seethed with excitement, and the home players went at it hammer and tongs. It may freely be conceded that from this point to the finish, the Hammers had much the better of the game, for it was left to the Luton defence to maintain the advantage which the forwards had secured. The forwards themselves seemed pretty well played out.

Early on, Brown was badly sandwiched between two of the West Ham players, and taking the game all through, he had a pretty rough time, Piercy weighing on him very heavily. Gallacher and Barnes, too, seemed to have had enough of it, and the consequence was that the bulk of the work fell on the defence.

Twice more the ball was netted, once at each end, but offside nullified in each case. Bridge man put through after the whistle had gone, and Brown was given offside when making a

run. In this instance, the custodian came out to meet him, and the ball screwed off from between them and rolled gently into an empty goal.

Unquestionably, the Hammers played a wonderfully smart game in this half, and had the Luton defence been less reliable there is no knowing what might have happened. Platt was not troubled as much as might have been expected under the circumstances, seeing that the greater part of the play took place in the Luton half, but when he was called upon, there was no sort of hesitation about the response.

Chief danger came from a couple of beautifully-placed corners by Winterhalder, but Platt, surrounded by players, punched away, and he also saved brilliantly from a header at very close quarters. Blackett likewise played a great game, and not a little of Luton's success in warding off the persistent attacks was due to his strong kicking and resolute tackling. McCurdy was not quite so sound, his judgment and kicking both being occasionally at fault.

It was a great relief to the Lutonians present when the end came, and they were in high feather at the somewhat unexpected success of the Bedfordshire representatives. I say unexpected, because there is not a team in the Southern League which could go to West Ham and really expect to win. To pick up League points on opponents' ground is a difficult operation at any time, and it is especially so against men of the calibre of those who compose the West Ham eleven.

All three of the Luton halves played strongly, and it would be hard to say which rendered the better service. Bob Hawkes was as tricky and slim as ever; White performed with all his accustomed vigour, and Fred Hawkes was not a whit behind either, though two or three times he gave away free kicks which might have been better avoided.

Brown and Pickering were the best of the Luton forwards, but still, up to a point, they were all remarkably good. Their display in the first part of the game was worth going a long way to see, for better combination is seldom exhibited. I think if the outside men were to get in their centres at the first opportunity, it would give Brown a better chance. He is such a marked man that unless he can find an opening before his adversaries are ready for him, there is very little hope of his getting through.

In some comments on the game, "Astral," of the "Morning Leader," says:—"Rarely have I seen better football than Luton played for the first half-hour. The forwards were quick as lightning, and Pickering, the old Bury man, raced and dribbled to his heart's delight. Barnes on the left was a bit out of sorts, but there is fine metal in the Luton attack, and they play a very attractive game to watch, with their short, swift passes and readiness to shoot. I think they made the pace too hot for themselves, as in the second half West Ham ran them almost to a standstill, but the policy paid, and clubs had better be on the look-out for Luton's early burst. The halves, with Bob Hawkes to inspire them, played a robust tackling game. The fair-haired amateur has few superiors in the art of nursing forwards, and his active play gives the lie every minute to a seemingly frail physique. Blackett and McCurdy are two splendid backs, with good muscles to resist any invasion and a rare discretion in kicking. Platt kept goal cleverly."

Luton enjoyed the distinction of being the only visiting team to win a Southern League match on Saturday. Millwall and Portsmouth drew at Fulham and Bristol respectively, but Tottenham Hotspur, strange to say, were beaten at Brighton by 2 goals to nil; Brentford succumbed at Watford by a goal to love, Northampton were beaten at New Brompton 2—0, Norwich City at Reading 3—1, and Swindon at Park Royal 3—0.

The following is the Southern League table up to date:—

	Goals.						
	Plyd.	Wn.	Lt.	Dn.	For.	Agst.	Pts
Queen's Park Ran.	3	2	0	1	7	0	5
Bristol Rovers	3	2	0	1	10	1	5
Plymouth Argyle...	3	2	0	1	6	1	5
Millwall	3	2	0	1	4	1	5
Luton Town	3	2	0	1	6	2	5
Fulham	3	1	0	2	5	2	4
Brentford	3	2	1	0	3	2	4
Portsmouth	4	0	0	4	3	3	4
Reading	3	1	1	1	5	4	3
Watford	3	1	1	1	3	3	3
Tottenham H.	3	1	1	1	2	3	3
West Ham United	3	1	2	0	2	3	2
Brighton and Hove	3	1	2	0	3	6	2
New Brompton.....	3	1	2	0	2	7	2
Southampton	2	0	1	1	1	2	1
Norwich City.....	3	0	2	1	2	6	1
Swindon Town	3	0	3	0	1	8	0
Northampton	3	0	3	0	1	12	0

Bob Latheron, who has just been signed on and played for Luton on Monday, comes from Middlesbrough, but he played last season for Grangetown, and before that for Darlington St. Augustine's, the club from which Penman came. He is a sturdily-built young fellow, and can play in either of the outside positions.

The directors have also signed another half-back in the person of Anderson, of Kilmar-nock. Anderson, who plays centre or right-half, is 26 years of age, 5 ft. 8 in. in height, and weighs 12 st. 8 lbs. He has been capped twice for the Scottish League against the English League, and has also played for Scotland against Ireland. He is in Luton, and, with Latheron, will play for the Reserves at Leighton on Saturday. He is said to be a half-back of the Freddy White type, with any amount of go.

The match with Fulham next Saturday on the Luton ground is being looked forward to with much pleasure and a good deal of confidence by the Luton supporters, though they recognise that it will be a very tough struggle. The Luton team will be identical with that which did so well at West Ham.

Another stand is in course of erection, opposite the present structure, and will provide accommodation for some fifteen or sixteen hundred people. It will be 288 ft. long and there will be eight tiers. The price of admission to this will be 2d., and it is expected to be ready for occupation next Saturday.

With this stand up, Luton will be a little more independent of the weather, as there will then be covered accommodation for more than two thousand people.

It is hoped that the "result board" will be in working order by Saturday, giving half-time results. The telephone is already installed, and these half-time results will be of much interest to the local patrons.

On Wednesday next, Luton are due at Brighton in a United League fixture. After their defeat of Tottenham, Brighton will no doubt expect to avenge the beating they received at Luton.