

The Southern League.

LUTON v. FULHAM.

Played at Luton on Saturday. Result:—

Fulham	1 goal.
Luton	nil.

The teams were as follow:—

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

Fulham—Fryer; Ross and Thorpe; Robot-ham, Morrison, and Goldie; Soar, Wood, Edgley, Wardrope, and Threlfall.

Referee, Mr. F. Kirkham (Preston).

If only the one goal of the match had fallen to the homesters instead of the visitors, Saturday would have been a great day for Luton. Never before, for an ordinary League game, had the spectators rolled up in anything like the numbers they did on this occasion, and the hearts of the directors rejoiced as they stood up aloft, in the breezy heights where the representatives of the Press are located, and watched the stream of people wending its way to the turnstiles.

There could not have been far short of eight thousand persons present when the teams appeared on the field, and a mighty cheer went up as the rival elevens stepped into the arena. The weather, though dull, was fine, but there was a troublesome wind, and Fryer, winning the toss, took whatever advantages there were, setting Luton to kick off towards the railway end.

The homesters, however, were the first to get away, and Pickering receiving from a free kick, was responsible for a good shot which went just by the upright. The same player got in a nice centre a few moments later, but Fryer was able to clear. Play afterwards had to be stopped on account of McCurdy, who sustained some damage to his foot.

Luton had slightly the better of the exchanges for a time, and then a series of throws-in took Fulham into the vicinity of the Luton goal, and Bob Hawkes gave a corner, which was well placed by Threlfall, but a foul was given against the visitors for tackling Platt before the ball got to him. Edgley next threatened danger, but Blackett cleared in great style.

After Fulham had had another look-in from a foul against Warner, Luton transferred operations and Brown almost succeeded in getting through, but was eventually stopped by Ross. A couple of free kicks enabled Luton to put on the pressure a bit, but the shooting was off the target, and Fulham going away on the right, Edgley headed in from a centre by Soar. Platt punched away, and a free kick conceded by White proved fruitless.

Luton replied with a corner, and subsequently Brown, receiving from the left, had the hardest of hard luck with a stinging cross shot which completely beat Fryer and then struck the upright. Had that scored, as it fully deserved to, what a different tale there might have been to tell! Fryer next cleared from a middle by Barnes, and then Pickering, who was going through in a very promising fashion, was fouled just outside the penalty area.

The free kick proved of no avail, and a corner, the outcome of a centre by Gallacher, was also valueless. Still another corner followed, however, a hot shot by Warner going behind off one of the Fulham defenders, and then there was a very exciting time, Luton striving hard to get by Fryer, but at last McCurdy put an end to the attack by shooting wide.

The visitors responded and Edgley sent a little wide, whilst a promising centre by Threlfall was neutralised by Wood, who cultivated a close acquaintance with Platt before the arrival of the ball. A foul against Bob Hawkes still kept the play at the Luton end, but nothing of any note happened, and when the whistle sounded the interval there was a blank score-sheet.

The game so far had been of rather a disappointing character, for there had been very little method in the attack on either side, and the kicking was more frequent than scientific. All four backs gave a good show, and for the most part had been well able to deal with such efforts of the forwards as survived the attentions of the halves, and neither custodian could complain of having been overworked.

During the interval an acrobat took possession of the pitch and went through a brief performance, whilst the Volunteer Band also discoursed music for the edification of the public. With the wind a little in their favour, it was hoped that Luton would show to greater advantage in the second half, and so far as having the better of the play was concerned, they did, but their attacks lacked sting, and they seldom looked like scoring.

The homesters forced a couple of corners at the outset, and from the second of these, placed by Gallacher, Brown headed just over the bar. A third corner, obtained through the instrumentality of Warner, was nullified by an unusually bad shot by Bob Hawkes, and then the visitors going away on the left, put the ball to the centre, and, to the consternation of the crowd, Edgley scored from nearly thirty yards out.

It was a beautiful shot, and Platt seemed to have no chance with it, despite the long range. Encouraged by their success, Fulham renewed their efforts, and Threlfall just missed the mark. Hands against Blackett gave then another chance, and then Luton forced the play for some considerable time, no fewer than half-a-dozen corners falling to them. Several of these were well-placed by Gallacher, and with a little luck the homesteers might have equalised, but the luck did not come their way, and Fryer kept his goal intact.

The visitors became dangerous from a goal by Pickering close in, but Luton cleared, and taking the ball along, still another corner rewarded their efforts. Barnes placed and after two or three attempts had been made, Gallacher afforded relief to the defence by getting offside. Pickering, Warner, and McCurdy subsequently had pot-shots at the Fulham goal, but the only decent one was that by Warner, and when time was called Luton had lost the game by a solitary goal.

Although, taking the play all through, Luton did more aggressive work than Fulham, they seldom raised the hopes of their supporters to a very high pitch. Indeed, it was surprising how little combination there was on either side, for never once during the game did the men seem to get well together.

The great weakness with the Luton forwards was at outside. Barnes did fairly well, though he is not what may be called a really dangerous man in an attack, but Gallacher was terribly weak. The outside right seldom puts in a centre at the first opportunity, and even when he does succeed, after turning and twisting about, the defence has had time to concentrate on the inside men, who are thus deprived of any chance.

Both outside men have this weakness, and until it is remedied Luton will never score many goals against a strong defence. As I have said before, Sandy Brown is a marked man, and every moment a centre is delayed makes it more difficult for him to shake off the attentions of his opponents. But Brown or no Brown, the best centre is that which is taken on the run and dropped just in front of the inside forwards.

Then the Luton attack suffered in another respect, and that is, that the halves, with the exception of Bob Hawkes, did not give them many of those passes along the ground which enable a forward to take the ball on the run. White did yeoman service in stopping the other side, but he was lacking in the way indicated, and Fred Hawkes was not quite as successful as usual.

No fault could be found with the Luton backs. McCurdy, after being a little shaky at the start, settled down to a real good game, and Blackett was again in great form. He seems to be just about as good as they make 'em. In goal, Platt had practically nothing to do, and it was rather rough on him that he should have been unable to get to almost the only difficult shot put in.

Fulham are a very good team, and seem

to be a better balanced lot than last season's. Of course, it is a great advantage to them to have a man like Fryer in goal. The big custodian is a host in himself, and unless he is beaten at close quarters, he is invincible. Ross and Thorpe play a sound game at back, and Morrison is easily the pick of the halves. The forwards want some stopping, and the fact that Soar, who still plays a good game at outside right, is not so conspicuous as he was last season, shows that there has been an improvement in the other positions.

Mr. Kirkham's refereeing gave general satisfaction. It was quite a pleasure to have an official who thoroughly knew his business, and knew that he knew it.

The Mayor and Town Clerk of Luton were among the visitors to Saturday's match, and received quite an ovation as they walked in to take their seats on the stand.

Except that the hitherto invincible Queen's Park Rangers were beaten by Millwall by 2 goals to nil, the other Southern League matches went pretty much as expected. Watford did well to draw at Norwich City at one goal, but Bristol Rovers' success at Swindon—2 to 1—was fully anticipated. Southampton, after being a goal behind at half-time, just got the better of Northampton by a similar margin. All the other winning teams played at home. Plymouth beat Reading by 2 to 1, Portsmouth vanquished New Brompton by 4 to nil, and Tottenham Hotspur and Brentford beat West Ham and Brighton respectively by 2 goals to nil.

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

	Goals.						
	Plyd.	Wn.	Lt.	Dn.	For.	Agst.	Pts
Millwall	4	3	0	1	7	1	7
Bristol Rovers	4	3	0	1	12	2	7
Plymouth Argyle...	4	3	0	1	8	2	7
Fulham	4	2	0	2	6	2	6
Brentford	4	3	1	0	5	2	6
Portsmouth	5	1	0	4	7	3	6
Queen's Park Ran.	4	2	1	1	7	3	5
Luton Town	4	2	1	1	6	3	5
Tottenham H.	4	2	1	1	4	3	5
Watford	4	1	1	2	4	4	4
Southampton	3	1	1	1	3	3	3
Reading	4	1	2	1	6	6	3
Norwich City	4	0	2	2	3	7	2
West Ham United	4	1	3	0	2	5	2
Brighton and Hove	4	1	3	0	3	8	2
New Brompton.....	4	1	3	0	2	11	2
Swindon Town.....	4	0	4	0	2	10	0
Northampton	4	0	4	0	2	14	0

Luton will have to fight hard for League points during the next few weeks, as not one of the matches down for decision within that period promises them a very easy task. Their home games are with Bristol Rovers, Portsmouth, and Millwall, whilst they are away to Queen's Park Rangers, New Brompton, and Swindon. The last two are the weakest teams, but then points away from home want a bit of getting.

This time last year Luton had three points for five matches, having beaten Watford, drawn with Fulham, and lost to Swindon, Southampton, and Plymouth.

I am sorry to hear that Anderson, the new centre-half, met with an accident while playing for the Reserves at Leyton on Saturday. He had only been playing twenty minutes or so, when he wrenched his ankle very badly, and he has since been confined to his bed, it being necessary to give it complete rest. If all goes well, he will probably be able to turn out in a week or two.

By the way, E. Dobson, the Tottenham amateur, who played centre-forward for the Reserves in this game, created a very favourable impression. He stands nearly 6 ft. and puts one very much in mind of Woodward. It is hoped that he will turn out on Saturday next against the Queen's Park Rangers' Reserves, but unfortunately his club—Page Green Old Boys—have got a Senior Cup-tie on, and it is possible he may not see his way to leave them.

Last Saturday's gate-money at Luton amounted to £192, which is a record for a six-penny gate. I understand the charge for admission to the new stand is to be raised from 2d. to 3d. for first eleven matches, but it will be entirely free for the Reserves' games.

The half-time results will be given on the new board at all Saturday matches—Reserves as well as first.