

FOOTBALL.

THE SOUTHERN LEAGUE.

LUTON V. FULHAM.

LUCKY WIN FOR FULHAM.

Played at Luton on Saturday. Result:—

FULHAM	...	...	...	...	...	1 GOAL
LUTON	...	...	...	...	...	NIL.

The teams were as follows:—

LUTON:

	Platt			
	Blackett		McCurdy	
F. Hawkes	White		R. Hawkes	
Gallacher	Warner	Brown	Pickering	Barnes

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Threlfall	Wardrope	Edgley	Wood	Soar
Goldie	Morrison		Robotham	
	Thorpe		Ross	
	Fryer			

FULHAM:

Referee Mr. F. Kirkham, of Preston.

There was a very large crowd on the Luton ground on Saturday, and they were rewarded by seeing a grand game, in which the teams were so evenly matched that it was really a shame that one should have obtained a victory.

It is true that the visitors were the team which got what they did not deserve, and then only by the narrow margin of one goal to nil, but it should not be overlooked that the previous Saturday Luton was in the same enviable position.

In earlier days it used to be looked upon as a bad sign if the London papers said that Luton had a chance to win. If anything, on the day named, they said Fulham would have all their work cut out to win, and again these writers erred, that is, regarding the result alone, for though the visitors won they would hardly claim to have had much, or any, the best of the play. Still, Luton's turn will come round again.

Fulham, of course, have one of the most expensive teams in the League, and it is usual to expect them to give a good account of themselves. They brought with them the redoubtable Fryer, whilst more than one of the others have faced the Luton colours before this season. The veteran Wood turned out for them, and fed Soar assiduously. Albert was in fine form, too, and gave the defence on his side of the field a lively time.

Fryer won the toss, and Luton kicked off from the Dunstable end. The home side had the sun behind them, but faced an erratic wind which interfered considerably with the course of the ball. They were quickly in the vicinity of Fryer, but the goalkeeper was not to be caught napping, as was the case last year, when Luton chalked up half a dozen against him.

The first foul of the match was given against Fulham, and it nearly led to the first goal being scored, for McCurdy, who took the kick, placed to a nicety, and the ball going to Pickering, he stopped it and had a pot-shot at goal. The leather, however, went wide by a trifle. Fryer had to save several times in the ensuing play, but the shots were of an easy variety and were easily disposed of.

McCurdy, in kicking at the ball, removed a piece of turf, and held his foot as if he had hurt it, and the referee gave him time in which to mend and he was soon as well as ever. The Fulham men then got down by means of a foul on Wardrope by F. Hawkes, but it was not a bad one. From the kick Bob Hawkes was forced to give a corner, which was not productive of any result, as a free-kick was given against one of the visitors for charging the goalkeeper when he had no hold on the ball.

This afforded relief, but Fulham came again, and it was left to Blackett to put the damper on, which he did by a smart piece of tackling. Blackett was kicked by one of the visitors, and as naturally resented being made the ball, and as he had something to say to the culprit, and it looked likely to develop into something more dangerous than words, the referee gave him a word of advice.

Just previously Blackett had been fouled but the referee did not notice it, and there may have been some grounds for his behaviour now.

A free-kick against Luton looked dangerous, but the ball was got away, and Brown was making a bee-line for goal when he was hooked up by Morrison.

The reporters in their wind-swept box nearly joined in the game, thanks to the assistance of Thorpe, who lifted the sphere into the pigeon-loft—I mean Press-box—but, as they did not shine as footballers, only as critics the gentleman who had the compliment of having the ball at his head repelled the invitation. Thorpe repeated it at a later stage, but the critics were not to be drawn. It was bad enough to have the wind howling round like a hurricane without the ball being volleyed by a strong limbed footballer.

Pickering suffered from the unequal attentions of Fulham as when he was going through he was hauled up from behind. The goal was packed, and the kick was of little use. Still, when none expected it the ball came to Brown, and he got in a crashing shot which struck the goal-post. Up to this point the Luton centre was surrounded by the opposition, and he had but little chance of kicking the ball, much less of bringing down the Fulham goal. This was about the only spot he could hit from his position, and it was real hard luck that the ball should have struck the post.

Brown had the ball at his toe in the ensuing play, but he was pulled up by Ross, and Fryer was not tried. For a diversion Soar made a run and shot at goal, but his efforts went wide. One of the backs and Gallacher went for the ball from the goalkick, and the Fulham man had the misfortune to have his knickers split, and the crowd laughed immensely when he made a run for the dressing-room to get another pair. Barnes, who was playing a good game, forced a corner, and once more the ball just missed the goal.

Evidently it was not Luton's lucky day. Fryer had to save on more than one occasion, but he was equal to all demands. Pickering was pulled down by one of the Fulham half-backs, and a corner forced by Warner followed, but no result accrued. Luton then made a sustained attack on the goal, which was only ended by McCurdy kicking by the post. Fulham ended a promising attack by Soar putting very wide. Edgley had the last chance of the second half, and he shot wide. The interval was sounded by the referee with the score-sheet blank.

During the time spent in waiting for the teams to reappear, the Volunteer Band, under Mr. Goodger, played selections of music, and a clever contortionist amused the crowd by an excellent display of turning and twisting on the ground and lifting two chairs with his teeth. A collection was made for him, and he realised a goodly sum, if the way the people responded was any criterion.

The visitors' right wing dashed away on the re-start, but they were pulled up before they made the acquaintance with Platt, and rushing to the other end, Luton were awarded a corner, forced by Gallacher. Play was transferred by Fulham and Wood shot wide.

Back to the lower end the ball was carried, where another corner was forced. Gallacher lifted the ball very nicely to Brown's head, and the Luton centre had heartrendering luck in just clearing the bar with the ball.

Warner was very conspicuous with his foot-work, and he broke away, and, passing to his confrere, Gallacher, hit one of the backs in centring, and the corner which resulted was followed by another, both of which were not turned to account. Fulham broke away for the second time, and caught the defence in a bit of a tangle.

The scene of operation was on the left wing, and Threlfall, watching his opportunity, put across, and Edgley, waiting his time for an opening, shot hard and straight from 25 yards' range and completely beat Platt.

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I have heard some say that Platt should have saved the shot, but I cannot agree altogether with them. Certainly, he appeared to have had plenty of time to see where the ball was going to land from such a distance, but it was such a fine cross-shot that he might easily have been deceived by the flight of the ball. It was a shot of just the same variety as that with which Brown struck the goalpost, and it might be claimed that Luton had a moral right to an equal division of points in consequence.

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Fulham started a campaign of fouling soon afterwards, and this infected White, who retaliated. Fulham saved their goal by giving a corner, and, in fact, they seemed not to mind how many they gave when pressed, for, with the exception of Brown's header, the goal seemed as safe from falling from a corner kick as from any other shot of equal range.

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If more than one player besides Fryer was distinguished for repulsing attacks it was Morrison. He particularly dealt vigorously with Brown, and, in fact, with all the others who came his way; and often it was his foot which landed the ball from the goal to the other side's quarters.

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McCurdy popped up after Blackett had failed to clear the ball, and his action was particularly valuable, as the Fulham men were hovering well up for any possible chances which might accrue. Platt, whose long kicking has often been commented on, took one kick just about six yards from the goal-line, and landed the sphere right out at the other end of the field. Had it been straighter it would have given Fryer some work. I should think when a long kick is required from near goal Platt should take it.

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Right at the last minute it looked as if Luton must equalise, and a Luton director near me exclaimed: "Here's the equaliser," but it was not to be. Luton, however, forced more corners, but none were turned to account, and Fulham, when the whistle blew for ceasing hostilities, still had the one goal lead, and carried off the points of a very even game.

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The game was not a scientific one, and the forwards of both sides failed to put in their best form. Luton played a straggling game, and the forwards were not up to their usual standard of play—Barnes excepted. After the rumours which have gained currency, his display was very gratifying. Pickering, too, did his part well, but Brown was so closely watched that he had no chance. I am informed by one who stood at the back of the Fulham goal that Fryer told his men to surround Brown! A compliment, no doubt, but very inconvenient for the player named.

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Warner was chiefly conspicuous for his runs about the field, but I think he would do better to stay more in his place. He is a grand forward, and an acquisition, but he would be more useful if he stuck to his post.

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I was rather disappointed with Gallacher. He did not make the best of his openings. He always seemed to be waiting for Warner to come up whereas he often had chances of rushing up the field and troubling the defence with a cross-shot. The half-backs were all safe and McCurdy seemed to outshine Blackett in defence. Platt had very little to do.

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Morrison played a good game for the visitors whilst the backs defended stoutly especially in the second half. Edgley made a good centre and he was well assisted by the other forwards. Soar showed up better than he has done on some previous occasions. We had no exhibition of Fryer's capacities owing to the way he was covered by the backs.

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