

SOUTHERN LEAGUE.

TOTTENHAM HOTSPUR v. LUTON.

A GRAND GAME.

The keenest and perhaps most interesting struggle in the South on Saturday was that between Tottenham and Luton, on the ground of the former, before a bumping gate of 25,000. Both sides regarded it as an important fixture, and none more so than the Londoners, who actually postponed their complimentary banquet to Tait until the match was over. To win the contest also meant a great deal for Luton, as it would give the Bedfordshire team a stronger position at the top of the League. That our own supporters took a deep interest in the fixture was abundantly proved from the fact that at least a couple of thousand followed the team up to London on Saturday.

The result was anticipated to be a close thing—there was no fear of it being a runaway match—and such it proved, Tottenham, upon whom the slight odds were laid, just squeezing home by the narrowest possible margin of one goal to love—an exactly similar result, it may be remembered, to Luton's visit to the Metropolis last season.

It was truly a grand game — one of the keenest struggles that has taken place on Tottenham ground for a long time; but, however unsatisfactory it may be, there can scarcely be a Luton supporter found who would not admit that the best team won. On the 90 minutes' play there could be no two opinions about the Spurs being the better side; and though it was hard luck for Luton to have their colours lowered during the last three minutes of the game, yet the majority were sportsmanlike enough to give credit where credit was due.

If the Lutonians were beaten and gave an inferior display, it was only inferior when compared with the form displayed by the homesters. Luton gave Tottenham a downright good game from beginning almost to the end, and if their play might not have been very scientific, they gave an excellent demonstration of a strong defence. One ventures to think that it was not until Saturday that Luton proved what a powerful defence they possess.

The first half was the more even of the two, and in this Luton, who had won the toss, had the advantage of a strong breeze. Tottenham were the first to attack, but Glen, their inside left, having missed a good opening, McCurdy returned, and Barnes getting away got in an excellent centre, but Brown was rank offside. Afterwards the game proceeded in a ding-dong fashion, and through the pressure kept up by Luton, Tait, the left back, had a great deal of work to do. Bob Hawkes was the first to really test Eggett, but the custodian diverted the course of the ball at the expense of a corner, which was badly placed indeed.

A combined run on the part of the homesters took the ball into Luton quarters, and a magnificent drop centre from Walton on the right wing, gave V. J. Woodward (who played the first time this season for the Spurs on Saturday) an excellent opportunity, and the popular centre-forward sent in a beautifully directed "header," which Platt just managed to fist away. The game was exciting and the pace fast—so fast that it was apparent the players could not keep it up for very long. Murray then tried an oblique shot, but this was cleared with little difficulty. Eventually Barnes got away, but Tait came across and cleared the attack, while at the other end Murray sent in a fine shot, which struck the cross-bar, and Platt had to tiddle it over. Warner shone for a moment or two and once just missed the mark.

The next item of interest happened close on half-time. Luton had kept up a desultory attack, but their efforts had proved abortive, when Tait relieved, and Woodward made a sensational dash for the visitors' citadel, completely beating both backs. McCurdy, however, managed to get back, and when Woodward was only a few yards from the goal mouth, and was actually in the act of shooting, the Luton player brought the Tottenham man to the ground. A penalty was, of course, awarded the homesters by Referee Bye, and Tait took the shot. Platt prepared to meet it, but as it happened the ball just struck his arm, bounding out, and the critical moment was over. On the arrival of half-time neither side had scored.

The game was not so even in the second half, as the Luton forwards made what was at best but a poor exhibition. It was evident, however, that the home backs had got them well measured, and though the visiting string broke away now and then, they were never really dangerous. That was no doubt the reason why during the last 25 minutes of the game, play was all in Luton's territory. It was during this time that our backs gave such a splendid exhibition, Blackett being especially prominent.

Still the home side maintained the attack, but their shooting was faulty. As it got near time, one felt that after witnessing such a fine game with such an heroic defence on the part of the visitors, it would be a pity for either side to score. On one occasion Platt pulled Kyle down by the shoulders, but fortunately Luton escaped a penalty being awarded against them. The light became bad, and many had left the field, believing that the match would end in a pointless draw. Platt and the backs had cleared so many difficult shots that it was thought the Luton goal was impregnable. It was just then that the unexpected happened. Tottenham had forced a corner off Bob Hawkes, Murray took the flag kick, and quite unexpectedly Woodward headed into the net, amidst tremendous cheering. Tottenham had won, but Luton had proved themselves a good team.

The reason the forwards on either side were able to do little was because both sides had such an exceptionally strong defence, though it is true neither side were accurate in shooting.

The Spurs made "rings" round Luton in midfield, and their combination was superb. Their forwards passed from one to another like clockwork, but their shooting was weak. To White more than anyone else was due the credit for breaking up the homesters' combination when in close quarters to the goal; although McCurdy played a sound game, and Blackett, who was rather erratic in the first half, played with greater judgment in the second moiety. Brown appeared to be completely at sea, and it was not because he was specially watched. Warner also "funkt" at times, and never shone to advantage. Barnes made some lively sprints on the wing, but he generally finished up disappointingly. Pickering made some good openings, and McDonald worked hard, but the visiting forwards never seemed to settle down, and for a considerable time in the second half the team had to play very much on the defensive. Bobs' play evoked warm admiration on both sides.

Woodward was the pick of the field; not only is he the best centre-forward in the South, but where is there a better in England? Bull is a really fine half-back, equal to any taking the field, and Tait played with his usual coolness, though miskicking at times, while Eggett, who had less to do than Platt at the other end, was generally safe. The Luton custodian was indeed lucky in saving the penalty, but it was very much of a "fluke." Tottenham were streets ahead of their opponents in combination; in all other respects, Luton were their equals.