

The Southern League.

TOTTENHAM HOTSPUR v. LUTON.

Played at Tottenham on Saturday. Result:

Tottenham Hotspur	1 goal
Luton	nil.

The teams were as under:—

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

Tottenham—Eggett; Watson and Tait; Morris, Bull, and Hughes; Walton, Kyle, Woodward, Glen, and Murray.

Referee, Mr. F. Bye (Sheffield).

Luton have ever been an attractive team in London, but no previous visit has aroused the interest throughout the football world to the extent of that to the White Hart-lane ground on Saturday last. It was certainly the largest crowd a Luton team has ever played before, the general estimate being 25,000 at least. It will be observed Luton were fully represented, turning out what was, previous to Saturday, their undefeated eleven, and, as the sequel shows, they kept this record intact until exactly ninety seconds from the finish.

Two changes were made on the Spurs' side, the more important being the inclusion of Woodward, who was making his first appearance of the present season, while Darnell, who hails from Biggleswade and has many times played against Luton Reserves, was dropped in favour of Hughes. I understand this alteration was made with a desire to hold Warner in check, and, as events turned out, it certainly paid from a Tottenham point of view, for Luton's right-winger never appeared happy throughout the game, being much less in evidence than is usual with him.

Both teams were greeted with enthusiasm on making their appearance, Woodward especially obtaining a round of cheering from the home spectators. At least one thousand Lutonians made the journey, and naturally they gave their pets a shout, while the three ex-Spurites numbered in the team caused additional support to the welcome extended.

Bob Hawkes won the toss, but there was little advantage gained thereby; indeed, Tottenham were the first to get into the danger zone through a free kick against Luton for handling, but this came to nought. A minute later Woodward gave Murray a chance to break through, and for a moment matters looked ominous, but Bob Hawkes came across and relieved the situation. It was now Luton's turn to attack, and Warner getting away gave Macdonald the ball when the latter was nicely placed, and he put in a grand drive, which, however, was just the merest trifle too high, and it passed over the bar at a terrific pace.

Luton hereabouts promised to more than hold their own, but it was not for long, and their usual luck in the early stages deserted them, inasmuch as no goal came along. On one occasion Macdonald was given offside when taking a pass from Brown, but in my opinion the referee made a big mistake, and it was distinctly hard lines for Macdonald, who was finely placed. The nearest Luton came to scoring during the whole game was a surprise grounder by Bob Hawkes. Eggett just pounced upon it right on the line near the post and turned it round at the expense of a corner, which Barnes placed behind. It was a grand shot and fully deserved to score, but, as I have previously noted, it was scarcely Luton's lucky day.

Before the game was a quarter of an hour old, the Spurs had assumed the upper hand and were doing the major part of the pressing. Murray was given rather too much rope on several occasions, but his final attempt was usually effectually blocked. Still, he made one clever burst through, beating both Blackett and F. Hawkes, and it looked a certain goal until White bobbed up in just in time and kicked the ball into touch.

Glen next tested Platt with a beauty, but Luton's goalie tipped it over the bar in clever style, and the corner was unavailing. Brown made a characteristic dash through immediately following, but the ball came to Warner at a difficult angle and he placed wide. Warner did better with the next chance that came to him, but Eggett was able to get the ball away with comparative ease, having a clear field in front. At the opposite end Woodward was observed to be well away, but White succeeded in getting the ball out of danger by giving a corner, which Platt disposed of in a clever manner.

F. Hawkes punted nicely up the field, causing Eggett to leave his goal without securing the ball, but no Lutonian could get on the spot in time to force the ball through an open goal. Six minutes before half-time Kyle got through, but failed badly by placing wide. A minute later an even more dangerous movement on the part of Woodward caused the Lutonians present to hold their breath, for he was observed to be making tracks for Platt in a threatening manner. Eventually McCurdy effectually stopped by grassing him inside the penalty area, and the referee promptly awarded a penalty kick. Tait was entrusted with this, but Platt judged the direction cleverly, and to the delight of the Luton section of the crowd kept his charge intact.

The only noticeable incident up to the interval was another good save by Platt from a drive by Glen, and the players retired with the score-sheet still blank. In the second half Barnes was given an early opportunity to break through by a well-judged pass from Bob Hawkes, but only a goal kick came of the movement. The pressure was not sustained, and Kyle forced a corner which was well placed. Platt coming out to punch away was fouled and a free kick for Luton got the ball out of danger once more.

Murray was next penalised for fouling, and Eggett dropped the ball from the place kick, but someone fouled again, and a free kick for the Spurs was the result. Ten minutes before time Kyle, who had now changed places with Woodward, was seen making tracks for goal, and Platt came out to meet him, both players falling over about ten yards out. A great shout went up for a penalty, but the referee shook his head. However, he went across to his linesman as the Tottenham players still appealed, but eventually the incident closed in a corner for the Spurs.

The crowd at the back of the Luton goal did not relish this decision at all, and several stones were thrown at Platt, while one only just missed Blackett's head by the barest shave. Blackett called the attention of the referee to the fact, but although he stopped the game he took no decided action, and until the close Platt's post was far from an enviable one, for the spectators jeered and shouted every time the home players got within shooting range. About the final effort by Luton was put in when there was still three minutes to go, Barnes getting the ball right across to Warner, who just failed to reach, and with Luton content to act on the defensive a draw looked certain.

But a minute later Bob Hawkes, in attempting to clear the ball, did not properly get his foot to it, and a corner resulted. This was placed about four yards out, and Platt, who made a dash for it first time, slightly misjudged it. Although I believe he just touched the sphere, he could not get it over the players' heads and Woodward headed through an open goal, thus snatching the victory right on the post. It was distinctly hard lines to lose at this stage after keeping a clean sheet for an hour and twenty-eight minutes, but on the run of the game undoubtedly the spoils went to the better side.

During the present season the local forwards have been generally voted the strongest feature of the team, but on Saturday the defenders came out with the greater credit. Platt had not a deal to contend with, if the nature of the opposition is taken into account, but he dealt well with all that came to hand. He certainly earned the thanks of the excursionists from Luton when he saved the penalty, and I learned after the match that he was really fouled by — when he came out to save the corner which meant so much to the result.

Undoubtedly Blackett and McCurdy played the finest game since they have been associated. I do not remember a single mistake on the part of either, and this must be almost a unique experience in such an important match. Their comrades immediately in front had a warm time in holding the clever Spurs' attack in check, but it was not in this department

Macdonald, who time after time worked for openings that were literally thrown away. Warner never really got going; Hughes certainly was a worrier, but even when the Luton man did succeed in getting by, Sandy Tait seemed always able to check any really dangerous movement. Barnes and Pickering did not appear to settle down at all, while Brown found a rare stumbling-block in Bull.

Woodward was without a doubt the smartest forward on the field, and his admirers had many chances to cheer his marvellously clever work. Glen was probably his greatest help-mate, the latter's height standing him in fine stead in securing the ball when surrounded by a crowd of players time after time. Bull played a great game at centre-half, apparently without turning a hair, for he always appeared to be on the spot when wanted. The Spurs' backs were not seen to the same advantage as the Luton pair, simply because the visiting forwards gave them little opportunity to shine, while Eggett was seldom troubled, most danger coming from half-back shots on the part of the two namesakes in that division.

Except for the fact that it spoils Luton's away record and deposes them from the head position of League leaders, it cannot be called a really bad performance to lose by a lucky goal scored in the closing minutes at Tottenham, and not many teams will run them so close.

Generally speaking, the Press, in commenting on the match, gave Luton a little more credit than was really deserved. Seeing that the forwards gave their poorest exhibition since the five have been playing together, it is distinctly encouraging to be told that the team did so well, for it gives us reason to hope that their true form will carry them a long way yet. Appended will be found a selection from the Press criticisms.

In the "Daily Mail" Mr. Alfred Davis writes: "The game was worthy of the occasion, and in every way a great one—quite the best I have seen this season. . . . Luton's defence was superb." After remarking that the Spurs played one of their best games and deserved their victory, he adds: "Luton are a fine team, and they created a most favourable impression."

Mr. Gilbert L. Jessop, the well-known cricketer, writing in the "Weekly Dispatch," says: "Hawkes, the conspicuous figure of the Luton team, and indeed of both sides, experienced a good many vigorous spells. Despite this, he was untiring in attention to the Tottenham forwards, and seemed to be blessed with more than two legs, so brilliantly did he show up throughout the afternoon." Summing up, Mr. Jessop observes: "There was little to choose between the two sides, although the home side deserved to win."

"Tottenham Hotspur," says the "Referee," "may well felicitate themselves upon the return of Vivian Woodward to his old accustomed post as centre-forward. He it was who finally gave the Spurs a hard-earned victory over Luton, the team that, reckoned by its goal-scoring capacity, has no superior in the South. Apart from that incident the Spurs could claim no superiority over their rivals. It was one of the best games seen for a long time at Tottenham, and Luton must be considered unlucky to lose in the last minute."

"Lloyd's Weekly" says it was "a splendidly-fought game, and although the Spurs were the superior lot in attack, Luton exhibited such sterling defence that they deserved at least to share the points at stake." The "Express" states truly enough that "Sandy Brown and Barnes and the other sharpshooters were completely eclipsed by the Spurs' defence, and rarely showed any signs of that brilliancy which the home spectators anticipated."

The "Morning Leader" thinks that "the Spurs rather luckily gained the only goal of the match," and that "Luton must certainly be reckoned with in the race for honours." The "Athletic News" is somewhat severe at Sandy Brown's expense, thinking that had he "played with brightness and a little more industry, Luton, notwithstanding that they suffered by the side of the Londoners, would probably have returned home victorious."

"The game was worthy of the occasion," says the "Sporting Life," "and victory went to the side which on the day's play deserved it, but the visitors earned a word of praise for the great fight they put up. The effect of the result is to put Tottenham at the head of the table, but they are there only because of their goal average, as Fulham made a profitable journey to Brighton, and by capturing both points at stake they mounted over Luton, and equal Tottenham in the table. It should be borne in mind, however, that the Craven Cottagers have played one more game than the Spurs, and there are other clubs in close attendance, so that a slip is likely to be a very costly matter. So tremendous is the struggle for premier honours that the first nine clubs in the table are separated by only three points. It is a truly remarkable state of affairs."

The match at Tottenham was not the only one affecting the championship. Fulham did well to gain a couple of points at Brighton, and Plymouth at home gave Portsmouth a sound beating—3 goals to nil. Southampton, however, fared badly in their home match with New Brompton, only making a draw at 1 goal all, but the Saints had a very weak team out. Bristol Rovers drew at Reading, and Millwall were responsible for a similar performance at Brentford, the scores in each case being 1 goal.

The only place in which there was anything like prolific scoring was at Watford, where Queen's Park Rangers were successful by 4 goals to 3. At Northampton, West Ham were beaten by 2 goals to 1, but at Norwich the match between the City and Swindon had to be abandoned on account of the fog.

The following is the League table up to date:—

					Goals.		
	Plyd.	Wn.	Lt.	Dn.	For.	Agst.	Pts.
Tottenham H.....	11	7	2	2	18	7	16
Fulham	12	5	1	6	13	6	16
Luton	11	6	2	3	27	12	15
Southampton	11	6	2	3	16	13	15
Plymouth Argyle....	12	6	3	3	17	10	15
Bristol Rovers	12	6	4	2	23	17	14
Portsmouth	12	4	3	5	20	14	13
Millwall	12	5	4	3	17	14	13
Brentford	12	5	4	3	12	12	13
Northampton	11	5	5	1	10	21	11
Queen's Park Rans.	12	5	6	1	21	18	11
Norwich City	11	4	5	2	16	14	10
Reading	12	4	6	2	13	17	10
Watford	11	3	5	3	13	15	9
West Ham United...	12	4	8	0	12	16	8
New Brompton	12	2	6	4	8	30	8
Swindon	11	1	6	4	8	17	6
Brighton and Hove	11	2	8	1	8	19	5

On Saturday next Luton will be at home to Brentford, who drew with Millwall last week, and the local representatives, it is expected, will be as per usual. Blackett is not an absolute certainty, having been damaged in the encounter at Tottenham, but it is hoped that he will be fit. On Monday, the first team will visit New Brompton for the return United League match.

Luton Town v. Brentford and Bassett v. the World for supplying a good Overcoat or Mackintosh to watch the match in.—Note address:—28, Wellington-street.—[ADVT.]

The Reserves have to go to Woolwich on Saturday, to play the Arsenal Reserves in the S.E.L., and they hope to put up a good game. In their last six matches, three of which have been away from home, the Reserves have scored no fewer than 24 goals.