

The Southern League.

SOUTHAMPTON v. LUTON.

Played at the Dell, Southampton, on Saturday. Result:—

Southampton	2 goals.
Luton	1 goal.

Teams:—

Luton—Platt; Blackett and McCurdy; F. Hawkes, White, and R. Hawkes; Gallacher, Macdonald, Brown, E. Dobson, and Barnes.

Southampton—Clawley; Clark and Hartshorne; Lee, Hogg, and Maston; Tomlinson, Hedley, Harrison, Brown, and Mouncher.

Referee, Mr. H. Smith (Boston).

It will be noticed the two changes mentioned in these columns last week were duly made in the constitution of the Luton forward rank, while Southampton were practically at full strength, for their latest capture from Ireland (Johnson, centre-half) was not due to arrive until the Monday of the present week. The Saints have scarcely been doing so well this season as usual, although they are well up among the leaders as a result of their victory of Saturday. Harrison, who is usually on the spot when goals are about, had been absent from the team for six weeks, but he made his reappearance against us on this occasion and gave no evidence of his unfitness.

The Luton players were down in good time, having lunch at Southampton, but for the opening twenty minutes they did not appear to have shaken off the effects of the long journey, and consequently the Saints had a monopoly of the attack. Within the first minute we had an evidence of what was in store, for a nice touch through by Harrison allowed Mouncher to force a corner off Blackett, but F. Hawkes disposed of the incident by getting in the way of a good shot by Hogg from a rebound immediately following the corner kick.

This relief was not for long, as Tomlinson managed to get the better of McCurdy well out on the wing, and dropping in a fine centre Platt was forced to make a couple of saves in quick succession. The second was a particularly fine effort, for the whole of the Southampton inside forwards were well up, and it appeared an easy thing for one or the other to touch through, but Platt made a daring punch right over the heads of the half-back line and thus saved the situation.

Hartshorne hereabouts made a faulty kick following a left-wing rush and centre by Luton, and Macdonald all but reached the ball, but Clawley, realising the danger, came out and just managed to get his toe to the ball as Mac arrived on the spot. It was an extremely close thing, and the spectators gave the local custodian a big cheer. At the opposite end Mouncher was allowed to go on when several yards offside, and but for the coolness of Platt a goal must have resulted. As it was, both Hedley and Turner got in good attempts, but Platt managed to get them both away, although he was seen frantically appealing to the referee between times.

The game was only eight minutes old when Harrison, with one of his old-time bursts, got through in the centre, although tackled by McCurdy. F. Hawkes came over to the rescue, but could not control the ball, and it rebounded from him to Brown, who was quite unattended and had no one but Platt to beat. The Saints' inside-left just touched the ball across the goal-mouth, and it found its way in the extreme corner quite out of the reach of Platt. It was an extremely lucky point, but it counted all the same.

Tomlinson, who at this stage was the chief instrument in getting the ball through the Luton defence, again managed to work his way goal-wards, and almost did the trick with a fine oblique shot. But gradually the Luton attack improved, and the exchanges became more even. Twice were Luton awarded free kicks less than thirty yards away from Clawley, but neither was turned to account, Blackett placing the first yards wide, while White, who took the other, sent the ball into one of the home defenders and it cannoned on to the wing, where Tomlinson raced away with it in good style, and it was Luton's goal which was endangered. The defence held out, however, and managed to relieve the situation. A pretty run by Barnes and Dobson promised to mend matters, but the former's centre came across rather awkwardly, and Gallacher failed to gather in time to be of any service.

Still the Luton attack kept up the pressure, and Brown was discovered with the ball at his toe, with only his brother-in-law to beat. In some way Clawley managed to judge the direction of the ball, and brought off a good save, without really clearing, and Gallacher meeting the ball, sent in a stinger which hit someone or other, and thus a promising movement was spoilt more by good luck than good judgment.

A better fate befell a well-executed movement on the part of Dobson, who wormed his way through the opposing half-back line and dropped the ball over to Macdonald, who was a yard or so inside the penalty area exactly in front of Clawley. The Saints' backs did their best to prevent him getting through; indeed, it appeared dangerously like a penalty, for he was palpably hampered, but he managed to keep his feet, and Clawley realising something must be done, and that quickly, made a dash forward, but Mac kept his head and planted the equaliser in good style.

Half-time was fast approaching, and with Luton now on level terms, the crowd were kept on tenter-hooks, for our boys had quite recovered from their stiffness of the opening twenty minutes and were more than holding their own. But they could not force a lead, although several times they were just on the point of getting through. Hogg at this stage saved the home side from defeat by the whole-hearted manner in which he went about matters, apparently being all over the shop at the same time, for he certainly kicked the ball twice to any other player's once. From a Luton point of view one goal each was fairly satisfactory, especially as the improvement mentioned was very pronounced at this stage.

Quite early in the second half Platt was badly injured by Brown, who, in making a dash for the ball, kicked Peter on the chin. The game was stopped for several minutes, as it was patent Luton's goalkeeper had met with a nasty accident, but after some attention from Lawson he resumed his place. It transpired afterwards his lip was cut right through, and in addition he sustained a severe shaking up, for Brown rushed at him in a very reckless manner.

After a spell of Luton attacking the Saints' forwards came down once more and Hedley got in a shot, but a free kick was awarded to Luton, someone apparently being offside, but personally I could not see what was wrong. Midway in the second half Platt brought off one of the best saves of the day, when he tipped a low swift grounder from Hogg wide of the goal. The ball came to him through a crowd of players, and Platt had to practically throw himself across the goal, for at the moment of Hogg letting drive he was at the opposite post to where the shot was directed.

During a hot attack White was compelled to give a corner, and following the taking of this Bob Hawkes also obliged the Saints with a second, unfortunately, as it turned out, for from this the winning goal came. A mighty shout told those at the opposite end of the field the ball was in the net, but from the dressing-room end it was quite apparent Platt never had a chance to save, for he was bundled through the goal without mercy. I cannot see how it could have been other than a foul, for Peter never had the ball at all, but the referee promptly pointed to the centre, and as events proved the match was won.

I afterwards gathered there was even a greater cause to grumble at the decision, for the ball had been over the line before it reached the goal-mouth, and several of the Saints' players concurred in this, including the taker of the corner kick. Re-starting, Luton forced three corners in succession, but Gallacher, who took them, did not lift the ball high enough, and the last was easily got away from the field without any Lutonian getting a chance to send it towards Clawley. I thought an equaliser was coming when Barnes came on, and centring nicely across.

I ought to mention that Meston managed to get the ball through once more for Southampton, but the whistle had previously gone for an infringement near the centre of the field, although the crowd were not aware of this and quite thought it was a third goal. Indeed, I heard that certain members of the scribbling fraternity actually wired the result away with this point to the credit of the home side.

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As will be gathered by the running comment above, after the opening stages Luton had an equal share of the game, and would have had only their deserts by sharing the spoils. I am willing to admit the home team had the better balanced attack, but even in this line, after they had settled down to each other's play, Luton did by no means badly. Macdonald was easily the most prominent in this department and played a fine game, giving his partner many openings, besides being all there when a dash through the centre was needed.

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Dobson, of course, was strange to his comrades, but he did quite a number of good things, and several times, in conjunction with Barnes, gave the home defenders as much as they could well manage to prevent the downfall of the goal. In addition, he was really the main cause of the goal which Macdonald finished, and on the whole justified his trial, which, against such redoubtable opponents as the Saints, was rather a big one. The visiting defence compared man for man quite favourably with the Saints. Bob Hawkes was more suited by the state of the turf than in some recent matches, and quite pleased the crowd with his clever touches forward. Platt fully earned the thanks of his comrades by the way he held the fort during the opening pressure, and right through he played a safe game, with the possible exception of a mis-kick in the second half, but even then he cleared the ball from danger.

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For Southampton, Tomlinson opened in great style, but he fell way afterwards, and McCurdy had his measure in the second half. He was well fed by his partner, who, although getting on towards the veteran stage, is up to all the tricks of the game, and now that Harrison has returned to the centre, will probably keep a permanent place at inside-right. Of the halves Hogg was easily the pick, which called forth the remark from one of the Saints' officials in my hearing, "You see what getting another man for the position does." I presume Hogg had not been altogether pleasing his new masters by this and reports from the Press. Hartshorne was much the better back, Clark certainly not keeping up his last season's reputation as the best right back in the Southern League.

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Fulham were again victorious on Saturday, beating Bristol Rovers by a goal to nil, but at Plymouth, Tottenham Hotspur went down by 2 goals to 1. Northampton underwent something like a total eclipse at Park Royal, the Rangers routing them by 6 goals to 1, and at Brighton, Portsmouth piled up five goals against the home team. Millwall drew at Reading at one goal all. Brentford did ditto at Norwich, where the Canaries equalised in the last minute, and at Watford. Swindon gained an unexpected victory by 2 to 1. West Ham at home beat New Brompton by the only goal of the match.

The following is the League table up to date:—

	Plyd.	Wn.	Lt.	Dn.	Goals.		Pts
					For.	Agst	
Fulham	16	9	1	6	21	8	24
Tottenham H.....	14	9	3	2	24	9	20
Southampton	15	8	3	4	22	18	20
Plymouth	15	8	4	3	22	13	19
Portsmouth	15	6	3	6	27	15	18
Bristol Rovers	16	8	6	2	32	22	18
Luton	14	6	4	4	29	17	16
Brentford	15	6	5	4	15	16	16
Millwall	16	5	6	5	21	21	15
Norwich City	14	5	5	4	19	16	14
Reading	15	5	6	4	18	19	14
Queen's Park Rana.	16	6	8	2	28	24	14
West Ham United	16	6	10	0	16	19	12
Northampton	14	5	8	1	12	32	11
Watford	14	3	7	4	17	25	10
Swindon	14	3	7	4	12	21	10
New Brompton	15	2	8	5	10	36	9
Brighton and Hove	14	3	9	2	10	25	8

Luton are now seventh on the list, but are in a relatively better position than Bristol Rovers, who have played two more matches, and Portsmouth, with two points to the good, have played one more game. With reasonably good luck, Luton ought therefore to improve their position during the coming holidays, as they have Reading at home on Saturday, Watford on Monday, and Northampton on Boxing Day.

Really, they ought to be quite equal to winning all three matches, and if they can do that the six points should help them a lot. But they will have to be careful, especially on Saturday, for if the Biscuiteers are at the top of their form they will want some holding.

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

For the Reading match on Saturday, Bob Hawkes will play inside-left, E. Dobson will take the outside-right position, and Gallacher will figure at half-back.

The United League match between Luton and Crystal Palace, which was stopped five minutes before time on account of darkness, is to be replayed at Luton on Monday, Feb. 19th.

Frail, the old Luton custodian, who now keeps goal for Stockport County, had a penalty given against him on Saturday for a foul on Lamberton, another old Luton man and now of Clapton Orient. Lamberton took the kick and failed to convert, but he was the shining light of the Orient forwards, and scored two out of three goals.

It seems that there has been a rumour about the town to the effect that the Amateur Football Club is "breaking up." We are informed, however, that this is quite unfounded, and that the Club is going along in a very satisfactory way.