

The United League.

LUTON v. LEYTON.

Played at Leyton on Saturday. Result:—

Leyton	3 goals.
Luton	2 goals.

The teams were as follow:—

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

Leyton—Draper; Meredith and Ramsey; Evans, Gray, and McLean; Hesham, Bush, Newton, Brand, and Plested.

Referee, Mr. S. Hudson (Greenwich).

Although minus R. Hawkes and Warner, it was quite expected the team sent to Leyton would prove capable of winning, but a rather unfortunate set-back was the result. As Watford continue to earn winning brackets in their United League fixtures, it will now be almost impossible to catch them up, especially after their victory on Saturday at the Palace.

At the time the fixture was made, the Leyton officials were very sanguine they would be able to get a big gate if Luton would give them a Saturday, and as two could not be spared, it was decided to pool with a Monday at Luton. Unfortunately, our Monday gates have been far from satisfactory, and the result is the arrangement has not proved the success it was hoped for. On Saturday the takings were just over £40, and the total of both matches was below £60, not by any means a paying amount for either club. By the way, I was informed at Leyton on Saturday their wage bill was £15 a week more than Luton's.

At one end the pitch was very bad from almost the half-way line, and, as usual, our players did not take to it kindly. Still, the first opportunity came their way when White was fouled near the middle of the field. Blackett was entrusted with the free kick and put the ball well up, but Brown was adjudged off-side when he secured it, and thus the movement failed. At the opposite end Platt was called upon by Bush, but he cleverly saved the shot without getting the ball far up the field, and ultimately it was sent back by Evans, but the aim was not true and it passed wide.

Play was not very exciting during these early stages, but after a quarter of an hour Plested managed to get in a decent centre, which Blackett would have easily disposed of by heading away, but Brand hooked the ball away with his hand and Newton neatly turned into the net. Luton appealed strongly for hands against Brand, but the referee awarded the goal. This was by no means the only decision of the official our players objected to, although of course it was the most important, as it had a distinct bearing on the result.

Within a very few minutes White equalised with a good shot which passed just under the bar, Draper being quite nonplussed thereby. This gave Luton more heart undoubtedly, and a splendid opportunity was given Brown by Macdonald, both having forced their way between the opposing backs and the goal, but although Sandy was well behind his inside comrade at the time Macdonald gave him the pass, offside was given and a goal practically taken off the score, for it was almost a certainty Brown would have netted from the position he was in.

At this stage Luton were easily the cleverer side, and once or twice Draper almost let his side down, but good luck stuck to him on these occasions, particularly once when, after missing badly, he managed to get away at a second attempt. Of course, the ball was not the whole time at the Leyton end; indeed, only a brilliant dive by Platt prevented Newton scoring with a grounder immediately following a spell of pressure, but the resulting corner came to nothing.

Ten minutes before the interval Barnes came through cleverly and after the ball had been centred, Pickering saw an opening and placed his side ahead with a good drive. No further scoring took place up to half-time, although Luton were now easily the better side, and it seemed a question as to how many they would win by.

After crossing over, the game continued much the same, two or three corners falling to Luton without anything coming of them. Apparently our players imagined nothing more was needed in the goal-scoring line to bag the two points. But they received a fore-taste of what was in store when a shot was put in which Platt did not properly get hold of, and someone's hand was seen to punch at the ball. The crowd shouted for a penalty, but the referee took no notice until one of the linesmen caught his eye and informed him a Leyton player had knocked the ball down within the penalty area.

The referee, however, did not award the free kick, but threw the ball down instead. Twenty minutes from time a free kick was awarded the home side, which Ramsey took, and Bush receiving, put over to Brand, who equalised the score. From this point Leyton were masters of the situation. The crowd shouted themselves hoarse, and the players, I must say, responded gallantly to the call.

Platt's charge was constantly being challenged, and quickly Bush finished up a hot attack by driving the ball just inside the post and, as events proved, scoring the winning goal. It was only a slice of pure luck which prevented this being added to a minute later, for with Platt out of goal a shot was put in which must have scored, only that McCurdy, who had rushed into the breach, happened to stand in a direct line with the shot and it struck him and rebounded into play.

I should say Platt has not got through more work in any twenty minutes the whole season than the final period of the match on Saturday, and on the whole he came out of the ordeal with honours. So far as ability went, no doubt Luton were the cleverer team, but the dashing manner the Leyton players went about their work deserved to be rewarded, although of course they were lucky to the extent that Luton had not made matters safe earlier. I feel certain the award of the opening goal rankled in the breasts of the Luton players; still, that was no reason why they should not have put a trifle more life into the attack when they had the match in hand.

It cannot be said any Lutonian played a bad game; it was simply that they lacked the extra bit of dash necessary to drive home the advantages gained in midfield. Of course, the Christmas matches were a heavy task, but Leyton had quite as hard a programme in their class; indeed, they played one more match than Luton, although that was a friendly.

Draper did not have nearly so many shots to save as Platt, showing where the failure was, for, as I have already stated, Luton were, but for the final twenty minutes, easily the better side. Bush is very small, but he was the life of the home attack at the finish, and the spectators were hugely delighted when he scored his goal. In Plested the Leyton officials have unearthed a player who should quite fill Neave's place, for he possesses very fair pace,

while he centres with good judgment. On Saturday their half-back line was the weakest department.

Most of the leading clubs in the Southern League got a set-back on Saturday, Fulham, Southampton, and Plymouth all being beaten, but Tottenham were victorious over Reading by a goal to nil, and at Northampton Bristol gained a surprisingly decisive victory by 4 goals to nil.