

Football Notes and News.

By "Grasshopper."

SOUTHERN LEAGUE.

LUTON v. WEST HAM UNITED.

By effecting a draw only against West Ham on Saturday, Luton did not come up to expectations, particularly in view of the fact that they were once more able to place their full team in the field. In London last September, the local team conquered the Hammers to the tune of 2 goals to 1, and it was out of the question that the United should come to Luton hoping to get their own back. The fact that the visitors drew with the Arsenal in the round proper of the English Cup was no criterion of their form, while to get off by 3-2 in the re-play was considered fortunate for them; and in consequence the odds were in Luton's favour.

But as things turned out Luton were distinctly fortunate in making a draw, and no one could have been surprised if they had lost. The game was one of those near things which cannot be explained by "form," but which sometimes happen when one side or the other suffers from a deficiency of effort.

Warner appeared to be completely recovered from his recent lameness, and Luton's captain (R. Hawkes) was also able to take the field; it was thought at one time that though last week he did duty for the Reserves in the Beds Cup competition, he would not be able to take the field on Saturday, and Gallacher was put down as a substitute. To the delight of the spectators, however, "Bob" was able to turn out, and to put in good work for his side. The Hammers brought their strongest team, and a keen struggle was anticipated.

But the slippery nature of the ground made a first class exhibition out of the question; and, taking all circumstances into consideration, the display given was on the whole disappointing to the five thousand spectators, which, it will be noticed, was a small number, seeing that we had had no Southern League engagement at home since Boxing Day.

Winning the spin of the coin, West Ham naturally decided to take advantage of the weather conditions, and with the wind behind them they were not long in putting Luton on the defensive. Grassam and Featherstone (the visitors' right wing), opened the attack, and McCurdy failing to clear, the home side conceded a corner in the first minute. This initial success was not deserving of much thought, because Luton had not got into their stride; but the corner being safely cleared, the homesters broke away, the front string coming alone the field in a line, and Brown was placed in possession when in an excellent position, though the centre-forward handled, and a splendid opportunity was lost. "Oh! Brown — beastly!" was what the spectators said, and it was what they said again when the centre-forward made a wretched attempt by shooting wide.

But Brown more than atoned for those mistakes a little later on, when, after the West Ham citadel had been desperately attacked, he gave Luton the lead with a magnificent shot. The ball was smartly hooked into the corner of the net, Kitchen, the visitors' custodian, not having the slightest chance at saving. Barnes and Pickering may be given equal credit for this piece of good work. The former centred, and the latter might easily have scored himself, but he let the centre man have the opening.

Kitchen safely repelled thrusts from Pickering, and later from Barnes, when once more the Hammers assumed the aggressive; but they met with a stubborn defence, and though Platt had one or two smart shots to negotiate, he kept Luton's flag flying up to half-time, when the homesters were leading by 1-0. Taken altogether the first moiety was very even. It was not of exceptional interest. When the teams changed ends, victory seemed assured for Luton.

But for the rushing tactics of the United the second half did not contain any more interesting points than did the first. It was this rushing play of the visitors that completely mystified Luton, though it must also be confessed that in combination and defence the home side deteriorated greatly.

Barnes, for Luton, was the first to open the attack, but the Hammers quickly replied, and Featherstone dribbled the ball well into Luton's territory. Blackett cleared on that occasion, only to have Luton's opportunity spoiled by offside. West Ham kept up a desultory attack, and eventually, to the surprise of all, Platt included, Stapley, the visitors' fine amateur centre-forward, scored with a tame shot, and the teams were level again. The home custodian was dumbfounded to see the ball go into the net, and he apparently made no effort to save.

After this, play became faster, but scarcely more interesting. Luton missed one of the best possible chances, and for a long time afterwards the United more than held their own, in fact, the advantages accruing from a free-kick made them dangerous; but Platt did not mean to be caught napping a second time, and he fisted out some well directed shots, especially from Stapley. Now and then Luton broke away, and once they appealed for a penalty, though Referee Barker (Hanley), who was accused of a partiality towards the visitors, ignored the appeal. The homesters forced a few fruitless corners towards the close, but that was all the advantage that befell their efforts, and the game ended in a draw. Result:—

Luton, 1 goal; West Ham, one goal.

Twice the visitors came within an ace of scoring, once through Watson, and a second time through Grassam, though their shots, well directed enough, lacked force. Neither side was seen at anything like its best. Warner was very much off colour, and the same remark applies more or less to the defence, particularly in regard to the halves. In Featherstone, the Hammers have a really good wing man, of much promise, and Winterhalder showed his contempt of Blackett by always sticking to the Luton man.

By drawing on Saturday Luton still maintain fourth place in the League, though it is true that in all respects, excepting goal average, they are in the same position as Brentford—23 points each. We are not likely to improve our position, seeing that on Saturday we are due at Fulham, and though we may hope, we don't really expect to bring any points away from Craven Cottage. As things are going, it would seem as if Luton will finish in the top half of the League, which will be considered a very good performance, and a great contrast with last year's final figures.