

SOUTHERN LEAGUE.

LUTON v. WEST HAM.

A POOR EXHIBITION.

Played on the Town ground on Saturday.
Result:—

LUTON 1 GOAL

WEST HAM 1 GOAL

LUTON.

Platt

Blackett

McCurdy

F. Hawkes

White

R. Hawkes

Warner Macdonald Brown Pickering Barnes

O

A. Winterhalder

Featherstone

Watson

S. Stapley

Grassam

Piercy

Jarvis

Bush

Gardner

Jackson

Kitchen

WEST HAM

Referee: Mr. A. J. Barker, Hanley.

The attendance numbered about 5,000, although the fixture was an attractive one. Appearances pointed to the interest in the election having drawn away a large number of the regular supporters of the club. The ground was heavy and in places very slippery, though it was a great improvement on the condition of the turf of the previous Saturday. "Bob" Hawkes and Warner made their first appearance in the Luton team after their injuries, and on the West Ham side the position usually filled by Blackburn—one of the "stars" of the side—was taken by a local amateur—A. Winterhalder. Bush deputised Allison, and the amateur, H. Stapley, concerning whom such excellent reports are circulated, was the pivot of the front rank.

Luton had to kick-off, and in the first minute Warner found himself offside. The initial dangerous move was taken by Featherstone, who forced McCurdy to concede him a corner. This Platt punched over the cross-bar, and from this second resultant flag-kick Winterhalder put in a dropping shot which the Luton goalie excellently saved. West Ham attempted to maintain their momentary pressure, but Blackett relieved and set the home forwards at work again. Barnes put in a capital centre close to goal, but the ball glanced upwards from Gardner's foot and accidentally struck "Sandy" Brown on the hand, for which unintentional infringement the referee awarded a free-kick.

A long drive by Piercy was easily saved on the post by Platt, and the Luton front rank found their feet again. From a well-judged centre by Warner McDonald let drive at goal, but Jackson stopped the progress of the ball with his hands. The referee, much to the disgust of the crowd, failed to notice the occurrence. Pickering gave Brown a very fine opening, but "Sandy" failed to catch the ball properly and sent the sphere flying over the bar. Another clever centre from the foot of Warner was punched away by Kitchen, and the visiting forwards transferred play to the other end of the field, where a weak shot by Stapley went wide, and a dangerous middle by Featherstone was cleared away by White.

A little diversion was caused by the entrance of the Conservative candidate for South Beds. (Dr. Hillier), who made his way through the cheering and hooting crowd to the stand, from which he watched the game until half-time. The entrance of the doctor must have had some sort of influence upon the local players, for soon after he had taken his seat they scored. Pickering let a fine centre by Barnes, which he himself might have converted, pass on to Brown, who was unwatched, and this ruse enabled the latter to score an easy goal.

Play, which had become lackadaisical, smartened up, and a determined attack, led by Pickering and Barnes, brought about a very narrow escape of the West Ham goal. Player after player attempted to rush the ball through, but the members of the visiting team clustered so thickly in front of Kitchin that the sphere was successfully kept out, though more by luck than by judgment. Pickering essayed a long shot, which appeared to be sailing beneath the bar, when Kitchen shot out his arms and just managed to avert the danger to his charge in somewhat wonderful fashion. A good shot by Barnes met the same fate at the hands of the capable custodian, but caused him much less anxiety.

"Bob" Hawkes gave the visiting custodian a little trouble with a drive. West Ham pressed, and Stapley found one of his best attempts capitally dealt with by Platt, and another trial by the amateur went wide. Play changed to midfield again with neither side able to claim the advantage. A free-kick taken by Blackett, McDonald got through well, and sent high over the bar when in a good position. Half-time arrived with Luton leading by a single goal.

During the interval Dr. Hillier enjoyed a cup of tea with the directors, and when play was re-started he completed his circuit of the ground. Everywhere he went he received a fairly cordial reception, but here and there parties of young fellows signified their allegiance to his opponent's cause by the display of certain of his yellow-coloured bills.

Barnes led the Luton attack immediately on the re-start. The Hammers responded, and Featherstone carried the ball to the other end. Blackett defended in his usual capable style, and proved too much for the visitors. Luton made their way into a useful position again, but offside prevented them from putting a finish to their work. Winterhalder endeavoured to give his side an opening, but found a capable centre excellently cleared by McCurdy.

The equaliser came from a tame cross-shot by Stapley, which found Platt at the other end of the goal. The custodian made no movement to attempt to save, and appeared greatly surprised to see the ball in the net. This was one of the most astonishing and disappointing goals it is possible to imagine, but, nevertheless, it gave West Ham the equaliser, and brightened play up again for a period, during which both teams struggled hard for the lead. A glorious opening fell to McDonald. He was too unselfish and passed the chance on to Brown, who failed to take an advantage of it.

The visitors continued for some time to hold their own well, thanks to their playing in a more determined go-ahead fashion than Luton, but the game itself degenerated considerably, and was in the major portion of the second half uninteresting. Brown measured his length on the turf in front of goal, but the homesters' appeal for a penalty was ignored by the referee, whose decisions were generally considered unfair and gave little satisfaction. The public were somewhat relieved when the final whistle blew.

The game, taken altogether, was a poor display, which roused no excitement in the crowd. The play of the Luton team on Saturday was remarkably unlike that of the same team at the beginning of the season. On the exhibition of the first half the homesters deserved their goal lead, but taken on the whole, neither side could claim much superiority. The slippery state of the ground is by no means responsible for the poor display, although it tended to spoil science. The efforts of the Luton team were unpolished and indecisive.

The defence was good, Blackett being as reliable as ever. The halves did not follow up the front rank closely enough, and "Bob" Hawkes did not seem as much at home as he usually does. Of the forwards no one was brilliant, though McDonald was, as usual, the hardest trier. Brown's work was poor, and Pickering did little to justify his re-inclusion. Warner seemed nervous after his lengthy compulsory rest.