

SOUTHERN LEAGUE.

LUTON v. TOTTENHAM HOTSPUR.

ANOTHER FINE WIN FOR LUTON.

It was a great disappointment to a large number of the Town supporters, and also from a financial point of view a serious drawback to the directors, that the weather was so exceptionally unpropitious on Saturday. Sleet came down the whole of the morning, and did not abate sufficiently early enough before the commencement of the match to encourage many but ardent supporters to visit the Ivy-road enclosure. Still the five thousand spectators who assembled had little fault to find with the display, and much less with the result.

More than the usual interest attached to the fixture, in consequence of the fact that third position in the League might belong to either of them. Going upon the old axiom that a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush, it is almost certain that Fulham—the luckiest club in this season's tourney—will be champions of the South, as Southampton, though two games in hand, have their points to win before they are even with the London club. Up to Saturday the Spurs, with an equal number of matches played, were a couple of points in front of Luton, but after Saturday's result the points are even, though the Londoners retain third place, having a slight advantage in goal average. We may now confidently look forward to the Blues finishing up fourth in the League, if they fail to get third.

The ground on Saturday was a perfect quagmire; in fact there were pools of water in several places, and there was some doubt as to whether the game would be proceeded with; but Mr. Kirkham, the referee, went over the ground at noon, and decided that the match should proceed should no unforeseen circumstance occur.

As it was advertised that owing to illnesses and some recent suspensions the visitors would be unable to put a full team in the field, the hopes of Luton were distinctly in the ascendant. As will be seen from the list, the visitors' team was a very ragged one indeed, a remark that particularly applies to the forward line. Glen was at centre, but, of course, he is not a Woodward, and with the exception of Berry and Chapman (the right wing), the other men were more or less passengers. Luton also made one alteration on Saturday. F. White was unable to take his place at centre-half, and Gallacher took that position, and gave an exhibition that surprised even his friends. Though he does not adopt the rushing tactics of White, "Gally" played with such sound judgment and fed his forwards so accurately, that those who have always been accustomed to see White at centre-half, forgot for the moment that that player was absent.

The teams were as follows.

Luton: Platt; Blackett and McCurdy; F. Hawkes, Gallacher and R. Hawkes; Warner, McDonald, Brown, Pickering, Barnes.

Tottenham Hotspur: Eggett; Watson, and Tait; Morris, Bull, Hughes; Berry, Chapman, Glen Brearley, Whyman.

Luton's win of 2 goals to nil was a creditable performance, though losing by that margin was no indication of the play of the other side. The simple fact is that the Spurs were not up to form, and of course great allowance must be made for their scratch lot. Their shooting was not always accurate, and they showed a marked weakness in front of goal. On the other hand, it seemed as if every man on the home side had made up his mind to win, and went at it with a tenacity that nothing could resist.

The visitors lost the toss, and were obliged to kick against the wind, which at times almost amounted to a hurricane. Despite this serious disadvantage the 'Spurs played with much vigour, and though Luton did most of the pressing, their opponents made incursions into their territory now and then. Tottenham played a finer game at defence than they did at attack, even admitting that they were lucky in getting off once or twice. Eggett brought off some magnificent saves, especially from Pickering. After this Glen got away, but the Spurs quintette were not able to do much against the home halves, and the venue of play was transferred back to the visitors' quarters.

At length, after about a quarter of an hour's play, the first thing tangible occurred. Pickering worked his way through, but when in the act of shooting was fouled by Morris within the penalty area. Though he was not brought down, Pickering was robbed of a splendid chance, and without the slightest hesitation the referee gave the homesters the usual solatium. Bob Hawkes took the penalty kick, and made no mistake, giving Eggett no chance.

Though both sides tried hard there was no further score in the first half, and when Luton left the field with a lead of only a single goal, their chances were none too bright. What, inquired some, was to prevent the 'Spurs from piling on a couple of goals when they would have the advantage of the other end. However, once more the unexpected happened. Not only did Luton win, but they won well. By the time play was resumed the wind had considerably moderated.

Tottenham at once tried conclusions, and made tracks for the Luton goal, and when their efforts seemed likely to meet with success, they were pulled up for offside, or failed through weak shooting. To the delight of their supporters Luton turned a free kick to their advantage, and the forwards getting away gave Eggett a little trouble, but the custodian easily saved from Barnes, McDonald and Pickering, the later having to retire for a few minutes suffering from an accident to his mouth. The homesters were still attacking when a moment later, getting into close quarters, Brown judiciously passed back to McDonald, who scored from a fine screw shot, which went into the corner of the net, out of the goalkeeper's reach.

Though this was very satisfactory, as it gave the visitors three goals to get to win, yet victory was by no means assured; and when a perfect blizzard of snow passed across the ground, there was some fear lest the 'Spurs might surprise their opponents. But try as they might, the Londoners could not get on, and they certainly suffered from a little bad luck. For a time they were dangerous, but were not able to successfully penetrate the home defence. Afterwards the pace somewhat slackened down, and both goals were visited in turn. Both Platt and Eggett gave an excellent exhibition. When the whistle blew Luton were applying the pressure, and thus won by 2 goals to nil.

Result: Luton 2, Tottenham Hotspur 0.

During quite three quarters of the game play was very fast, and the homesters did better on a heavy ground than was expected. Every inch of the ground was contested, but the 'Spurs' passing lacked one thing—it did not succeed. There was no doubt about the best team winning. Luton were easily winners, though their opponents were surely entitled to one goal. Blackett played rather above his average on Saturday and the weakness, if there was any in the back-line, was in McCurdy. It is needless to say much about Platt, or the halves—they were in tip-top form. On the day's play, Pickering was distinctly Luton's best forward, and he has had hard lines occasionally in failing to satisfactorily finish his individual efforts.