

The Southern League.

LUTON v. NORWICH CITY.

Played at Luton on Saturday. Result:—

Luton 2 goals.

Norwich City..... 1 goal.

The teams were as follow:—

Luton—Platt; Blackett and McCurdy; F. Hawkes, White, and R. Hawkes; Warner, Macdonald, Dobson, Pickering, and Barnes.

Norwich City — Williams; Archer and McEwen; Livingstone, Bushell, and Bement; Muir, Wood, Ronaldson, Ross, and Brindley.

Referee, Mr. T. P. Campbell (Blackburn).

Norwich City paid their first visit to Luton on Saturday, and the probability is that they will remember the occasion for a good long time to come. The Lutonians have had hard luck more than once, have had victory snatched from them at the very last moment, but neither Luton nor any other team have been robbed of a point in a more exasperating way than that experienced by the Canaries on Saturday. Of that, however, I will speak later on.

Owing to the inclusion of McEwen and Ross in the Norwich ranks, the visit had been anticipated at Luton with a good deal of interest and pleasure, and the weather being beautifully fine it was not astonishing to see a large attendance. The spectators numbered fully seven thousand, and a gathering like that in the last month of the season was something to rejoice the heart of a director, even if it did not constitute a fresh record. Speaking from memory, I should say it was a record for an April match at Luton.

McEwen won the toss, and the homesters started off towards the Dunstable end, with the sun in their faces. Still, they were not disposed to worry about a little disadvantage of this sort, and very few moments had elapsed when they found themselves in the vicinity of the Norwich goal. It was soon discovered, however, that though a hard ground and a lively ball might be conducive to rapid travelling, these conditions did not tend to accurate shooting.

Dobson was the first to get a chance, but he shot over, and then Barnes gave Pickering an opening, but the inside-left also failed to keep the ball sufficiently low. The Citizens then transferred operations to the other end, where Ronaldson tested Platt with a grounder, but there was not much powder behind it, and Peter easily cleared. A fine return by Blackett resulted in a corner for Luton, and Macdonald placing, Dobson made a smart attempt but headed over. Another corner followed soon afterwards, but was not turned to account, and from a foul against McEwen, Blackett sent in a hot drive, the ball sailing just over the bar.

Norwich made a brief incursion and Muir headed wide from a middle by Brindley. The ball was quickly down the field again, and Dobson was responsible for a fine bit of play in which he got the better of McEwen and then passed to Warner, who sent behind. Luton now put on the pressure in real earnest, and only once was the attack relieved by a breakaway by the Norwich forwards. Then a misunderstanding by the Luton defence nearly brought disaster, but happily the situation was saved, and the homesters then settled down to a prolonged and ultimately successful assault on the City goal.

When success did come, it was the result of a grand effort by Bob Hawkes, who, with the ball at his toes, ran past all opposition and then unselfishly gave Dobson the opportunity of putting on the finishing touch. This the centre-forward promptly did, Williams having no chance to save, but personally I should not have been a bit surprised had Dobson been given offside.

A little later, the London amateur had the misfortune to receive the ball full in his face from a very hard kick, and for some moments he appeared to be quite dazed, while it is doubtful if he did not suffer from the effect all through the game. Pickering, who was going great guns, came wonderfully near increasing Luton's lead, his shot going out just the wrong side of the upright, and from a return by Blackett the inside-left again almost succeeded in doing the trick, but Williams saved by the skin of the teeth.

Dobson and Pickering then showed up with a fine run, but Warner, who was placed in possession, sent behind, and a lovely shot by Bob Hawkes was saved by Williams just against the post. Luton still piling it on, Williams had all his work cut out to keep them at bay, and once or twice had more than a little luck, though the way in which he saved a brilliant shot by Pickering did him infinite credit. On one occasion when Williams left his goal the ball went over his head, but he fortunately turned round and recovered it, and with luck like this on the part of Norwich and defective shooting by Luton, it was not surprising that the interval arrived without any addition to the score.

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The City were the first to get in evidence after change of ends, and Wood sent in a very hot shot at close range, but it passed just wide of the upright. The ball was then taken up the field, and Bob Hawkes, working his way through, seemed likely to repeat the success of the first half, but Dobson got in the way of his shot after the backs had been beaten, and the ball rebounded off him and thus enabled Norwich to clear.

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Not long afterwards McEwen missed a centre from Warner, and Dobson as a consequence had a splendid chance, but could not get control of the ball and the effort came to nothing. An equally good opening fell to Warner from a well-placed corner by Macdonald, but he shot high over. The Citizens made a vigorous response, and Ronaldson became very dangerous, but was unable to get the better of Platt.

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Luton subsequently fell away considerably, though Pickering was constantly trying to do great things, and twice he gave Dobson glorious chances, but from the first the centre-forward headed wide and from the second he shot wide. As a result of Luton's lackadaisical methods, the Canaries were now having a greater share of the play, and eventually from a centre by Muir, there was a bit of a scrimmage in front of goal, and Ross put through.

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This was a facer for Luton, and they at once tried to mend matters, Barnes putting in a brilliant centre, which, however, Dobson and Macdonald failed to get at. Towards the finish Macdonald had an easy opening, but shot miserably wide. The game was now fast drawing to a close, and there seemed every prospect of the points being divided, when the unexpected happened, and Norwich had their advantage taken from them in a way that they did not appreciate.

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Barnes had been threatening danger on the Luton left wing, and was tackled by Livingstone. Precisely what happened I cannot say, but the ball went behind and up went the linesman's flag. The referee looked to him and he pointed to the centre, which the whistle-holder took to mean a goal-kick, and a goal-kick he gave. The linesman continued to wave his flag, however, and after the ball had been kicked off a Luton player went to the referee and called his attention to the signal.

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The referee stopped the play and consulted the linesman, who, it appeared, had declared for a penalty. This was now awarded in spite of the City's emphatic protests, and Bob Hawkes taking the kick, netted the ball and thus gave Luton the victory in the last minute of the game. It was decidedly rough on the visitors, and there were not many of the spectators who did not feel sorry for them.

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The penalty may or may not have been deserved—not having noticed the offence I cannot say—but one trembles to think what would have happened had it been given against the home team under similar circumstances. As I have already said, there was a great deal of sympathy manifested with Norwich, and not a few would have preferred the draw to a victory won in such a way.

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Of course, taking the play all through, Norwich had nothing to complain of in being beaten. In the first half, Luton were all over the better team, and with a little more effectiveness in the shooting department they should

have been three or four goals up at the interval. In the second forty-five, the homesters slowed down a lot, and it was entirely owing to that that the City were able to score.

In the second part, too, Luton sadly missed their centre-forward. Dobson showed splendid form at the outset, but later on he appeared to be completely spun out, and could do nothing right. Whether it was through the nasty knock he received early on, or through lack of stamina or being out of condition, it was difficult to judge, but certain it is that he fell away in a most disappointing fashion.

The Luton left wing again rendered excellent service, Pickering especially being in great form, but if Barnes did not show up so prominently, it was only because he did not get the chances. Whenever the ball went his way, he made the best use of the opportunity, and some of his centres ought easily to have been turned to account.

The halves put in some good work, Bob Hawkes especially catching the eye, and that effort of his which led up to the first goal was a particularly fine one. Blackett played a grand game at back, and Platt was as smart as usual in goal, he having no chance at all with the one shot that went by him.

The Citizens are a sturdy lot, though some of them are fast reaching the veteran stage. Wood, however, was as clever as any of the forwards, but David Ross did not get many openings. At back, McEwen was as lively as ever, and apparently has still many years to go, while Williams gave a very good show between the uprights.