

The Southern League.

LUTON v. SOUTHAMPTON.

Played at Luton on Saturday. Result:—

Luton 5 goals.

Southampton nil.

The teams were as follow:—

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

Southampton—Clawley; Clarke and Warner; Meston, Leo, and Houlker; Tomlinson, Jefferis, Hedley, Harris, and Moucher.

Referee, Mr. E. Case (Birkenhead).

Although the counter attraction at the Palace may have kept a good many people away from the Luton ground on Saturday, there was nevertheless a good attendance, the spectators numbering fully six thousand. And these six thousand had a very enjoyable time, for the weather was delightful, and an interesting game resulted in a hollow win for the home club.

Luton had their best team out, but the Saints were not quite at full strength, Harrison being an absentee from the forward rank. Still, they probably fancied their chances, but if they did not, their supporters did. One enthusiastic Southampton gentleman wrote to a friend at Luton predicting a regular rout for the representatives of Strawopolis, and, metaphorically speaking, throwing up his hat in anticipation. What his feelings were when he received a telegram announcing the result and rubbing it in with an expression of sympathy, must be left to the imagination.

Luton won the toss and derived some advantage from a strong wind, which, however, blew almost directly across the ground. The start was a sensational one, for Bob Hawkes made a dash through at the very outset and working his way nearly up to the goal-line, about midway between the upright and the flagstaff, sent in a curling shot which found the mark, Clawley trying hard to save but being somewhat flustered by the presence of Macdonald and one or two other Luton forwards.

This unexpected success was greeted with boisterous applause by the spectators, and the home team also were greatly elated. They were soon attacking again, and Macdonald placed a corner, from which Barnes put over. A hot shot by Pickering was well saved by Clawley, and after a brief incursion by the Saints, Luton applied the pressure once more, and from a centre from the right, Bob Hawkes had a good opening, but kicked too hurriedly and the ball went wide.

A beautiful middle by the Luton captain was badly dealt with by Clawley, and the ball went out to Warner, who seemed a certain scorer as he shot towards an open goal, but Clarke filled the breach in the nick of time and kicked the ball away. Soon afterwards the Soton goal had another narrow escape from a centre by Warner, but Clawley just managed to save from a header, and Warner then put behind.

The second point was not long in coming, however, McCurdy placing well from a free kick and the ball rebounding off one of the defenders to Brown, who had little difficulty in landing it in the net. By way of a change, Southampton subsequently got the ball down the field, and Moucher showed up with a very warm cross shot, which was grandly saved by Platt, and Hedley then put over.

Play was speedily transferred to the other end, Bob Hawkes and the Luton left wing making repeated overtures, from one of which Macdonald received and sent in a tremendous shot. Clawley was taken altogether unawares, and the ball hit him bang on the nose, almost knocking him backwards. It was bad for the custodian, but it saved the goal.

From now to the interval, play was about evenly divided, both ends being visited in turn, but it was the visitors' goal which had the closest squeak, Pickering getting right through the defence and then sending wide. Platt had to deal with a couple of attempts by Tomlinson, one of which he ran out to and only cleared after a struggle and the other he punched away. Luton thus preserving a clean sheet and crossing over with a two goals' lead.

This was satisfactory enough as far as it went, but there were some who feared that the Saints might prove equal to pulling the game out of the fire. Luton, however, soon gave evidence of the fact that they were going all out, and the second half had not been long in progress when Pickering again got clean away, and as he was travelling straight for goal there seemed nothing between him and success. But just as he was about to shoot, he was tripped from behind, and of course there were loud appeals for a penalty. There appeared to be absolutely no doubt about this having been incurred, but, to the surprise of the onlookers, the referee, who had been following the players, allowed the game to proceed without interruption.

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Pleased with their let-off, the Saints began to take liberties and indulged in two or three fouls. Sandy Brown was the victim of one of these, and following upon the free kick, Barnes centred and Pickering scored with a beautiful shot which went in just under the bar. Clawley got to the ball, but could not keep it out.

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This made matters practically safe, and the spectators were not unduly disturbed when Southampton forced a couple of corners. Macdonald, whose nose was bleeding, had to go off for a time, but soon returned, and from one of his passes Warner obtained a corner, while a little later Brown got the ball in the net but was offside. Then Warner put the ball across again, and Brown, with rare judgment, jumped up and let it go on to Pickering, who was standing unmarked. The inside-left shot hard enough, but it went direct to Clawley, who was thus able to save.

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Luton were now monopolising the play to a very large extent, and from a corner placed by Barnes, Warner headed on to the bar. Better luck followed at the next attempt, the outside-right receiving the ball after an unsuccessful effort by Macdonald to convert a free kick and driving it home straight and true. This mightily pleased the spectators, who began chanting that tune which accompanied Luton's prolific scoring in the early part of the season.

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Even now there was another goal to come, and it came very quickly. Pickering being placed in possession by Barnes, went away at a tangent, getting the better of all opposition, and finding himself with only the custodian to face. Clawley ran out, but though he got in the way of the ball, it went back to Pickering, who had nothing to do but touch it into an empty goal.

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After this, Brown had a glorious chance from a centre by Barnes, but failed to turn it to account, and though Southampton had a couple of corners towards the finish, nothing further happened, and Luton ran out the winners of a sensational game by five goals to nil.

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With a little luck, they might very well have had two or three more goals, whereas Southampton really never looked like scoring, so that it will be seen there was a great difference in the play of the two teams. And yet the Saints, who are a remarkably well-set-up lot of fellows, worked hard enough, but unfortunately for them, they were never allowed to get together. The cool and clever way in which Bob Hawkes walked round them at the beginning had a disconcerting effect, and Fred Hawkes played his best game for a long time, whilst White was as strenuous as ever and showed clearly enough that matrimonial projects had not been allowed to get on his nerves.

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When the Southampton forwards got by the halves, they found a pair of strong and resolute backs opposed to them, with a smart custodian behind, so that perhaps it was their misfortune rather than their fault which kept them from showing to any advantage. Tomlinson and Moucher got away now and again, but were not able to do much damage.

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The Luton left wing were again in great form, Brown played excellent football, and the right wing showed up a lot better than usual later, Warner getting more work to do and doing it well. The Saints, failing to hold

the Luton forwards in check by any other means, adopted the one-back game during part of the second half, Clarke repeatedly going up among the half-backs, but though these tactics led to Luton being pulled up for offside several times, it did not stop their victorious career. Clawley, it must be confessed, gave a very poor exhibition in goal, and was quite unlike the Clawley we have seen before.

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The gate-money on Saturday amounted to £145, a remarkably good total for the day of the Cup final.