

FOOTBALL.

SOUTHERN LEAGUE.

LUTON v. SOUTHAMPTON.

"BLUES" RUNAWAY VICTORY.

Played at Luton on Saturday, before a crowd of about 7,000 people. Result:—

LUTON 5 goals;
SOUTHAMPTON nil.

Teams:—

LUTON.

Platt

McCurdy

Blackett

F. Hawkes

White

R. Hawkes.

Barnes

Pickering

Brown

Macdonald

Warner

O

Mouncer

Harris

Hedley

Jefferis

Tomlinson

Houlker

Lee

Meston

Warner

Clarke

Clawley

SOUTHAMPTON.

Referee, Mr. E. Case (of Birkenhead).

The weather was sunny but a strong wind blew across the ground. The surface was in that hard, unyielding condition which best suits the Luton style of play. These circumstances and importance of the fixture attracted a large attendance. In the previous Southern League match Southampton, playing at home, won by the narrow margin of 2-1 but since then the "Saints" have made their position as runners-up of the League pretty secure. "Bob" Hawkes, who received an ovation on turning out at the head of his men, won the toss but found very little advantage could be gained. Luton were at full strength, but in the visiting team Harrison stood down, Hedley moving into the centre and letting in Harris to fill his place at inside-left.

Following a fruitless run down on the wing by the Saints, McDonald discovered himself with an easy chance of which Clarke robbed him in a moment of hesitancy. Luton found themselves unexpectedly a goal ahead only a few minutes from the start, as the result of brilliant manoeuvring by "Bob" Hawkes, who placed across a fine centre. The custodian misjudged the flight of the ball, and the wind carried it along the cross-bar and just inside the goal, giving McDonald and Warner, who were ready and waiting, no need to put on any finishing touch. Southampton smartened up but found McCurdy too strong for them. Luton turning the tables by again pressing very hard.

Clarke headed away a very dangerous forward pass by Fred Hawkes but failed to put a stop to the Luton attack. Warner eventually forced a corner from which Barnes sent high over. Immediately afterwards Pickering gave Clawley considerable trouble with a very hot shot. In the opening stages Luton were much the better team, but Southampton settled down gradually and only an injury to McCurdy put a temporary stop to a short spell of aggression. Fine clearances by Blackett and Platt followed and the Luton front string got going once more. One of "Sandy" Brown's excellent passes out to the wings found Warner on the alert but his shot travelled straight across the mouth of goal and passed a few inches behind. McDonald stumbled in front of goal and the only result of Barnes and "Bob" Hawkes's joint efforts to convert was that the ball went behind.

Warner, of the Southampton defence, twice put paid to the account of the right wing and the Saints found their way into the opposite half of the field, where Harris drove over the bar in an attempt which would have given Platt more anxiety had it been better aimed. Blackett effected a fine clearance which narrowly missed bringing about the second downfall of the Saints' goal. Clawley saved a capital middle from the left wing but Warner caught on the rebound and let fly at the farther end of the goal. The keeper was absent and the ball was travelling beneath the bar when Clarke saved in the nick of time. Another fine centre by Warner, who was the hero of the hour, travelled only a yard away from the goal-line but went a-begging, his namesake heading away. White very cleverly headed out a hard drive from the foot of Harris.

The game up to this stage had been far more interesting than any which preceded it in the past few months, the Luton men appearing to have regained their form of the first part of the season. Clawley made two clever saves in quick succession from F. Hawkes and Pickering and the Southampton. Warner had to head away another fine centre from his namesake of the opposition front rank. The ball was returned and in attempting to breast it out Clarke turned it aside, Clawley being called upon to punch away. The Southampton defence was entirely responsible for the scoring of Luton's second point. They made a terrible mess of a free-kick and let in "Sandy" Brown who put through from half a yard's distance. A magnificent centre by Tomlinson was banged goalwards by Moucher, but Platt made a very fine save. Hedley caught on the rebound but sent over. A good pass by "Bob" Hawkes McDonald endeavoured to turn into the net but Clawley's ready fist shot out and averted the danger.

The famous goalie had another very lucky escape when McDonald, receiving from the left wing banged away before the man between the sticks knew what was happening. The shot went straight as a die, and, catching the custodian napping, struck him with terrific force in the face before he could raise a finger to help himself. A corner against Luton gave the Saints their most promising opening, Platt having to run out to clear. He was unable to get back immediately. After travelling from man to man for a few moments the pressure was relieved and Luton worked their way down again. Pickering had a chance which it seemed impossible to miss but sent across the goalmouth.

A long effort from the wings by Warner was caught by Clawley who fumbled and dropped the ball, but, managed to get rid of it before it could be placed between the posts. An excellent trial by Tomlinson was cleverly saved by Platt and an interesting half ended with Luton leading by 2-0. During the interval collection boxes inscribed "F. White's wedding present" were handed round the ground, and the appeal appeared to find a very ready response.

On the resumption Southampton relieved the tedium of tame mid-field play by dashing off but "Bob" Hawkes sent them back. The left wing journeyed down the field and forced Clawley to come out to clear. Next minute the goalie had to handle twice and a third attempt caused him to bang the ball on to the body of Pickering. Clarke deemed it advisable to give away a corner which turned out to be fruitless in order to save the situation. The Saints did their best during the short time they were in their opponents' half of

the field to reduce the score, but were seldom allowed to get within reasonable shooting distance. Finding himself unable to get close in they sent over the bar from long range. McDonald was injured as the result of Houlker's none too tender attentions but was, happily, able to continue.

A miskick by Clarke gave the Luton forwards a clear opening, but they allowed the ball to get into the possession of the opposition defence again. Pickering burst clean through but was foully fetched over in the penalty area by Warner as a last resource. Neither the referee nor the linesmen saw this, or another dirty piece of play of which "Bob" Hawkes was the victim, but a very flagrant piece of business upon Brown attracted their attention. The resultant free-kick from just outside the fatal area was taken by Blackett. Although not immediately successful it had its result in the scoring of the third goal. Barnes centred to Pickering who put in a twisting shot which Clawley could not reach and which passed just below the bar. The Southampton tactics thereupon became somewhat unclean but received insufficient notice from Mr. Case.

Two corners against Luton were resultless but the official in charge was roundly hissed by a section of the crowd for refusing to allow a free-kick against Southampton for handling almost under the bar of the Luton goal. McDonald received a nasty smack in the face from the ball and the referee stopped the game in order that his bleeding nose might be attended to. "Mac" having to borrow a handkerchief from one of the Saints' defenders and left the field for a couple of minutes. Play became milder, but the home forwards resumed forcing tactics. Warner obtained and himself placed a corner to "Sandy" Brown put into the goal when off-side. The point was disallowed. Southampton began to realise the danger of allowing the Luton forwards much rope and by playing one or both backs well up the field contrived to set them often off-side. This little manoeuvre failed in its object.

Warner seemed to be having matters all his own way, and beat his opponents times innumerable. With a little more luck, another of his fine centres would have been converted by Pickering. As it was, Pickering had his stinging shot finely saved by the clever Clawley. McDonald forced a corner from which White caused the custodian some anxiety with a shot which shaved the cross-bar. A free-kick given on the initiative of one of the linesmen resulted in the scoring of the fourth goal, Warner converting a centre by Barnes, Clawley slipping and letting the ball through. Only a fortnight before, a minor official was responsible for the goal which defeated Norwich City and must be considered lucky in the independence and justice displayed by many linesmen appointed to their home matches. Finding the score mounting so steadily, the excited crowd began to triumphantly chant, in the style rendered familiar at the time of the astounding defeat of Bristol Rovers, "One—two—three—four."

A few minutes later the spectators had to add the figure "five" to their song. Pickering received from Barnes and ran the ball towards goal. Seeing that the forward placed the ball rather far forward Clawley ran out to intercept him but missed, slipped and fell over. Pickering simply turned aside, continued his journey and tapped the sphere into the empty goal.

The crowd were delighted with this fifth goal, and so satisfied were a large section that many began to make their way out of the ground. Although so decisively defeated, the Saints were not disheartened and their style of play did not deteriorate. Indeed, the Saints' game was not so poor as would be imagined from the score, their only difficulty being that the brilliance of the Luton attack compelled them to act continually upon the defensive. In the few minutes left them they applied their energies so successfully to their task that they became more confident and commenced incursions into the home half of the field. As a result they forced two corners but the efforts of the front string lacked the necessary precision and both were fruitless. A cheer was raised by the delighted spectators as the victorious "blues" ran out winners by no less than five goals to nil.

The reason for such a surprising result is only due to the sudden return to form of the home forwards. For some weeks past, though the followers of the team have been slow to admit, the weakest part of the eleven was the front rank, and, after the many holiday games, the increase of dash and sprightliness is surprising. No one expected the club to do more than scrape home against such a brilliant set as the Saints and all were delighted. Regular followers of the "blues" were irresistibly reminded of the fruitful game against last year's Southern League Champions, and the pity is that this new vim came too late to help the team much farther up the table.

Of the team itself no one deserves more commendation than another. All seemed to find their old-time vigour without effort. The forwards worked with a science which was almost machine-like in its precision and several openings were given them. As the result of their aggressive combination which they might have turned to better account. At least two seemed certain to result in goals. Luck did not enter into the victory at all. So good were the halves that the Southampton forwards were almost third-rate, and Blackett and McCurdy easily kept them at more than a safe distance. Platt did not have that immense amount of hard work in which he revels, but what little did come his way was done in a fashion which gave no anxiety to anyone.