

FOOTBALL.

THE SOUTHERN LEAGUE.

FULHAM v. LUTON TOWN.

A SPLENDID DRAWN GAME.

Luton Town's second Southern League match took place on Saturday against Fulham on the ground near Putney Bridge. Result:—

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

Fulham.—Fryer; Thorpe and Ross; Goldie, Morrison, and Collins; Threlfall, Wheatcroft, Hamilton, Edgley and Bell.

Owing to the great boat-race between Harvard and Cambridge the start was delayed until half-past four, and the Fulham ground, being situated on the bank of the river, this undoubtedly helped to swell the gate. Many thousands of people who had watched the two crews start on their journey to Mortlake, turned into the ground in high spirits over the fact that Cambridge were leading, and the attendance was thereby increased up to about 20,000. Of these a large number were Lutonians. The visitors received a capital reception, the fact that they were wearing light blues (the Cambridge colours) perhaps having a little to do with this. The weather was sunny and perfect from both players' and spectators' points of view. The lateness of the hour for starting was much to the advantage of the teams, for by the time they ran into the enclosure the air was cooler and much more suitable for so strenuous a game as football than would have been the case earlier in the afternoon.

The comparative coolness of the atmosphere no doubt had a good deal to do with the bustling nature of the game, which was interesting, right from the time the ball was kicked off until the final whistle sounded. Fryer won the toss for Fulham and very wisely chose to set Luton with their faces towards the strong rays of the sun, which tended to deceive the forwards and spoil their play during the first few minutes. Nevertheless, the opening exchanges were fast and exciting, but favoured the home eleven far more than the visitors. Wheatcroft was the first to give an opening with a fine forward pass, but Hamilton failed to get to it before Jackson neatly cleared and thereby showed the anxious Luton supporters that he was absolutely reliable in the right-back position. Indeed, it was rather remarkable to see him so safe and cool in his first experience in the Town first eleven. Not a sign of nervousness did he show, and so well performed were all his tactics that before long he became the idol of the Luton followers, only second in popularity to "Bob" Hawkes himself.

Pickering and Barnes gallantly endeavoured to stem the tide, but found Collins's tackling a little too complete. Bell put in some good work which forced McCurdy into giving a corner but Jackson made himself responsible for the nullyfying of the attempt to score which followed. Fulham warmed to their work and Hamilton and Edgley pushed their way through the opposing halves up to the backs, whom they harassed into giving away a corner. This was weakly placed behind by Bell. It was left to Brown and Warner to endeavour to wake up the Luton forward line. They managed to get within shooting distance and transferred to Pickering, who failed them by sending wide. In reply, Hamilton endeavoured to show "Sandy" how the thing was to be done, but he reckoned without his host, for no sooner had he passed to the right wing than Bell was fouled. This resorting to extreme measures looked like becoming serious for Luton because Ross, who was entrusted with the free kick, put in such a rattling drive that Platt was forced to measure his length on the turf in a manoeuvre which turned the ball out of its course and sent it behind.

By this time the home eleven had got comfortably into the stride, and this fact they showed to the visiting backs pretty decisively. For some minutes the Fulham forwards gave their opponents a very hot time, but all their endeavours only served to further emphasise the soundness of the Luton defence. White fell back to assist Jackson and McCurdy, and seldom has the bustling centre-half shown himself to such advantage. He could do nothing wrong, but was always in the right place and at the right time. But this sort of thing cannot last for ever, and the "Blues" followers were relieved when the work of keeping the Luton lines clear was slackened. It was Edgley who put a finish to the hard pressure with a fine shot which shaved the top of the net. Then the tables were turned for a spell, the visiting forwards taking play into the other half of the field, where "Bob" Hawkes, who was as slippery as an eel, amazed Ross and Goldie with the ease with which he tricked them, and startled Fryer with a low, hard drive which the goalie was clever enough to save and clear.

This gave Fulham another opportunity. Finding the halves temporarily less alert they dashed off before any of the opposing eleven could recover themselves, but Hamilton finished badly by placing behind. "Bob" Hawkes replied by treating the Fulham opposition as though they were a set of schoolboys, whose football experience was almost nil, and gave Barnes an opening. For a time it seemed as though the left winger had spoilt his chance, for he carried the ball down to the corner flag, but appearances were deceptive. Barnes banged in a centre which the home defence awaited with anxiety, but Morrison was able to get it away in safety. "Sandy" Brown found Morrison a little too good for him in an attempt to get near enough to draw first blood, but at the other end Threlfall was able to get in the hot shot for which he had been waiting, only to see Platt very ably clear it away. Only half-a-minute later Morrison let drive at the net, but again the clever Luton goalie was more than equal to the occasion.

By this time play had levelled itself down. Fulham displayed less energy; Luton displayed more; and the game accordingly became rather even. Contrasting methods under these favourable conditions the visitors were slightly superior at this point in all departments except the forward line. Here the Fulham combination was more marked and their methods showed more finish than those of the Luton forwards, who adopted a straggling order, which was not conducive to the best work. The fact that Warner was playing out of his place was somewhat responsible for this, but Schofield was also to blame for selfishness. Barnes and Pickering showed up to best advantage in their passing movements, one of which brought them close in, and ended in Fryer fisting out twice in rapid succession. White tried his best to place the ball between the sticks, but Ross was rather fortunate in getting between him and the target and diverting a very fast shot which looked likely to beat the goalie. For the time being Luton had more than their share of the game and the Fulham defence suffered a very trying period. Once or twice the situation was saved by luck, certainly not by judgment, but at last Bell relieved by sprinting nearly the length of the pitch with the ball at his feet. Jackson accounted for his centre and placed the ball in the centre of the field, where play became a little slower for a while, until Threlfall ran down and passed Jackson, but succumbed to McCurdy. Wheatcroft tried to do the necessary, but Platt's fists caused him disappointment.

"Bob" Hawkes was brilliantly successful in all he did, and his actions were very closely and interestedly watched by the whole crowd, of whom all but the most rabid Fulham partisans seemed to find an exquisite delight in watching the manner in which he tricked Edgley. So noticeable was the latter's discomfiture that some of the more unfeeling of the spectators advised him to leave the field, seeing he was useless on it. Occasionally, however, he gave a glimpse of his capabilities, and one shot in particular, when he received from Hamilton, deserved a better fate than to shave the crossbar. Jackson put paid to the account of Bell, whose speedy bursts along the line were a feature of Fulham's forward play, and "Bob" Hawkes set Barnes going with a clever overhead kick. Morrison spoilt the winger's work, and an attempt by Schofield on the opposite side of the field was similarly treated by Thorpe. Half-time arrived with the score sheet blank.

The second half opened in a fashion which delighted the Lutonians. The visiting left wing spiritedly dashed down the field and eluded Ross without difficulty. To Thorpe, however, they had to give in, and Barnes reluctantly relinquished his shot. The Fulham forwards changed the venue of play, a clever combining movement bringing them dangerously near the Luton goal, until "Bob" Hawkes cleverly intercepted a pass intended for Bell. At once the visitors settled and forced their way into the home half of the field, where their hot and steady pressure drove Fulham to desperate measures. Ross miskicked badly and so alarmed Fryer that he left his charge and dashed out 20 or 30 yards in his anxiety to avert danger. Bell did his best to alter the state of things by a sprint to the other end, but when he reached McCurdy he found himself alone and obligingly gave up possession of the ball to the Luton back.

the breasts of the home halves and backs. Still, the defence never played like beaten men, and, favoured by the luck which the league champions always enjoy when playing against Luton, were able to withstand all assaults. Brown went as near as anyone to dealing the decisive blow. He had a fine opening, but hesitated a moment too long, and the two backs hurled themselves upon him and grassed him before he could get in his shot.

Fulham broke away at a great speed, but Jackson found no difficulty in sending them back, and again Luton put on the pressure. Goldie endeavoured to beat both Warner and Schofield at the same time, but was easily vanquished, and thereupon placed into touch. The aggression of the visitors had an irritating effect upon the temper of the homesters, and fouls were freely and needlessly introduced, but, fortunately, this did not last long. Schofield gave a good deal of trouble to both halves and backs, but leaving nothing to chance, three men eventually accomplished what one was unable to do, and robbed him. Time after time Ross was beaten badly, and the Luton forwards occasionally made the Fulham defence look smaller, probably than they have ever looked before. In this work the captain was, of course, very prominent, and his trickery frequently completely nonplussed his opponents. Still, try as they would, the Blues could not score. Their shooting was certainly not all it might have been but bad luck rather than this operated against their success.

Another breakaway by Fulham resulted in the narrow escape of the Luton goal, Platt having to catch and dispose of a teasing shot from Edgley. Ross's numerous defeats appeared to have prejudicially affected his temper, and when he winded Barnes just as the latter was getting away there were loud and resentful cries of "Dirty" from the crowd. Warner brought Fryer's fists into action with a hot shot, and a minute later Brown lost another fine opportunity by dilly-dallying, Thorpe gaining possession of the ball from off his very foot. Schofield, although still somewhat selfish, showed his play in its best light. His speed stood him in good stead and carried him safely past both halves and backs, but just as he was about to drop the ball in the goalmouth he stumbled and placed it over the line.

Just at this particular stage of the game Luton were fully three or four goals better than Fulham, but still Dame Fortune smiled on the London club with irritating persistence, until the spectators became reconciled to a draw, even while the Blues were showing that for the time being there was only one team in it. Pretty combination of the visiting forwards looked like bringing about the downfall of the home goal, but Fryer very cleverly dealt with two hot shots from Pickering. Brown and Warner, by a pretty passing movement, worried their way through the defence, but in the end the ball went a few inches on the wrong side of the posts. From now onward Luton relaxed their efforts and both teams showed that the pace was beginning to tell on them. The two forward lines took turns in attacking, but their methods lacked sting. Platt, however, brought off some sparkling saves from Goldie and Bell, and after a little midfield play in which neither team showed to very great prominence, the final whistle sounded with the score sheet still blank.

Jackson is a great improvement upon Hogg. For a youngster with his reputation to make his coolness and sound play was astonishing. Platt was as resourceful as ever, and apparently had profited by his slips at Brighton. McCurdy was quite as reliable as when the Luton club first knew him. Of the halves, "Bob" Hawkes was, of course, the pick. He was at the top of his form and it follows that he was the most brilliant player on the field. White has seldom, if ever, played a better game, and Fred Hawkes was a tower of strength. Of the forwards, all were good, but Schofield and Warner do not thoroughly understand each other's play. Consequently, the right wing was the weaker. It is bad policy on the part of the Directors to play Warner in the inside position at all. McDonald and Warner would be a more satisfactory pair. It seems hard to leave out such a fine man as Schofield, but it is very doubtful whether he could combine with McDonald as well as Warner. With the alteration suggested the team will be quite as good, or, perhaps better, than last season's.