

UNITED LEAGUE.

LUTON v. WATFORD.

Played at Luton on Monday. Result:—

Luton	2 goals.
Watford	nil.

The teams were as follow:—

Luton—Platt; Jackson and Hogg; F. Hawkes, Jones, and Gallacher; Schofield, Warner, Macdonald, Gittins, and Barnes.

Watford—Biggar; Aston and Brooks; Main, Hitch, and Richardson; Soar, Turner, Foster, Grimes, and Law.

Referee, Mr. P. Harrower (London).

Glorious weather favoured this fixture on Monday, and as the kick-off did not take place until a quarter-past five, the influence of the sun was not so unpleasantly felt as in the Saturday afternoon games. Luton, it will be seen, made several alterations in their team, McCurdy and White being given a rest in view of next Saturday's game, Gittins being given a trial at his proper position—inside-left—in place of Pickering, who so far has not yet reproduced his last season's form, and Macdonald appearing at centre-forward vice Brown. Bob Hawkes was also an absentee.

The opening play was not of a sensational order, though there was some excellent passing on both sides. Then Luton got away on the left, the ball was swung across and headed in from the right, giving Macdonald a fine opening, but the centre-forward shot weakly and Biggar easily cleared.

The home side made two or three further attacks, and once Warner nearly got through, only being robbed at the last moment. Watford created a diversion and Law made a dash for goal, Platt saving at the expense of a corner. This was well placed, and the ball hovered dangerously in the vicinity of the Luton goal until Jones at last succeeded in clearing.

Directly afterwards Platt saved well from a beauty by Turner, and Jackson cleverly trapped and cleared a centre from the right. Luton made a vigorous response through the medium of Gittins and Barnes, and the latter putting in a centre along the goal-line, Warner received in front after Gittins had been grassed and scored with a very neat shot.

Watford were not by any means disheartened, and very soon came near equalising, Grimes being a conspicuous figure in a bunch of forwards near the mouth of goal. To the relief of the spectators, Luton succeeded in getting the ball away, and a smart shot by Foster was also well negotiated by Platt.

The most noteworthy incident, however, was a run by the Luton front string. Barnes got clean away, and the inside forwards keeping behind the ball, Macdonald had a clear run from the outside-left's centre. Mac took the ball right in, and then, to the disgust of the onlookers, shot straight at Biggar, who was therefore able to save. It was a great let-off for Watford.

Play was promptly taken to the other end, where Foster headed in from a middle by Soar, and Platt fisted out. Main followed with a splendid drive, but the ball passed just the wrong side of the upright. Play was never long at one end, and Gittins being well placed, beat his man and then shot just over the bar.

Luton several times got within shooting range just now, Barnes showing up prominently in trundling the ball up, but the inside men lost their chances by not taking them when they served and manœuvring for better positions. Schofield forced a corner without result, and the next minute the Watford goal had another wonderful escape. Fred Hawkes put in a bouncing shot, which Biggar was unable to get rid of, but Macdonald, who rushed in, just failed to give the ball the slight touch required.

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This was followed by an equally thrilling affair at the other end, Hogg and Platt getting mixed in an effort to circumvent Foster, and the latter's shot hitting the bar and rebounding. Another shot was put in immediately, but though Platt had not got back he managed to catch the ball and clear. After this, Luton attacked strenuously, Barnes and Gittins making rings round Aston, and the right wing also having some rare fun at Brookes' expense, but try as they would, no goal came, and the interval arrived with Luton leading by a goal to nil.

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Upon the resumption, Luton were soon showing up in attack, and Warner recovering the ball on the goal-line, put in a very likely-looking centre, but one of the backs happened to be on the spot and cleared. A bad foul by Foster on Schofield provoked the displeasure of the crowd, but nothing came of the free kick, and Watford going up the field, Law sent in a shot which Platt nearly made a mess of. He let the ball go through his arms in attempting to catch it, but luckily he recovered possession in time to clear.

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The homesters were quickly on the aggressive again, and Macdonald, making a race with the backs, obtained the ball on the goal-line. He promptly centred, and Warner had the goal all to himself, but took a hurried shot and Biggar easily saved. Within a very short time, however, Fred Hawkes received a back pass from the mouth of goal and scored with a fast grounder, but the point was disallowed, apparently on the ground of someone in an offside position having obstructed the custodian's view. No one who touched the ball, at any rate, was offside.

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Macdonald taking a pass from the left, next sent in a lovely shot, which was well saved by Biggar. There could be no doubt now which was the better team, and the home side were experiencing hard luck in not increasing their lead. A brilliant run by Schofield was loudly cheered, as it deserved to be, for he left the lengthy Aston far in the rear, but he finished up with a cross shot instead of a centre, and the ball went behind. A lightning shot by Warner deserved to score, but Biggar met it very smartly with outstretched fists and averted the danger.

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Though Luton were running the opposition off their legs, the time was passing without any addition to the score, and it seemed likely that all their efforts would prove in vain. Then, as often happens, the goal came when least expected, Macdonald taking a back pass from Warner and beating Biggar all ends up with a shot that was taken without a moment's hesitation.

Still Luton were not satisfied. They continued to pile it on in the most brilliant fashion, and shot after shot was rained in at the Watford goal, Schofield and Warner especially being conspicuous with regular hot 'uns. But Biggar was wonderfully safe. A momentary diversion was created by Soar, who beat Hogg and dropped the ball in front of the Luton citadel, but Platt ran out and cleared amid the approving shouts of the crowd. For some time now Luton had all the play, with the exception of one good effort by Turner, who found himself in front of Platt with the ball at his feet. The custodian saved the situation, and the play was at once transferred to the other end, and fairly even exchanges in the last five minutes brought an exceedingly interesting game to a close.

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Taking the game all through, it was a very delightful one to watch, the play of the Luton team particularly being of a remarkably high order. Watford began well, but they could not cope with the more finished work of their opponents, who, during a part of the second half especially, played some of the smartest and trickiest football imaginable. There were only about twelve hundred spectators present, but they had a real good time—very different indeed from the eight thousand who saw the match on the opening Saturday of the season.

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But if there was one thing more than another proved by Monday's exhibition, it was the foolishness of passing judgment on a man at his first appearance. On the occasion of the first match, there were some who said that Jones was not a class centre-half. That opinion had to be revised on Monday, for Jones then played as pretty and effective a game as it has been my lot to see for many a long day. Gittins, again, was written down as a failure by some of the cocksure gentry, but against Watford he gave a first-rate account of himself, he and Barnes playing splendidly together on the left wing.

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Macdonald performed very well indeed in the centre-forward position, and Warner and Schofield were in great form on the right. The whole quintet gave a wonderfully good show. Fred Hawkes and Gallacher left little to be desired so far as they were concerned, and the backs acquitted themselves well, Jackson proving himself an extremely valuable man. Platt did some excellent work in goal.

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Of the Watford men, young Grimes, of Hitchin, was always a conspicuous figure in attack, and Peter Turner also was seen to advantage, whilst both Soar and Foster put in some good work, but they were completely eclipsed by the Luton front string, the members of which gave the Watford defence a very trying time. Biggar did splendid work in goal.