

Southern League.

LUTON v. SOUTHAMPTON.

Played at Luton on Saturday. Result:—

Luton 2 goals.

Southampton 1 goal.

The teams were as follow:—

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

Southampton—Clawley; Clarke and Eastham; Hogg, Bowden, and McLean; Harrison, Glen, Radford, Harris, and Mouncher.

Referee, Mr. A. J. Barker (Hanley).

Delightful weather favoured this match, and the ground was all the better for the rain in the early morning. Southampton have ever been a good drawing team at Luton, and it was not at all surprising to see a large attendance of spectators, though as far as one could judge, there were not quite as many people present as at the opening match. Probably the crowd numbered over 7,000.

When the Saints last visited Luton—it was towards the end of April—they found the home team right at the very top of their form and had to acknowledge defeat by 5 goals to nil. The most optimistic of Lutonians hardly anticipated a similarly decisive verdict on this occasion, but the excellent display given at Fulham and repeated against Watford inspired confidence, and had anyone put the popular question, "Are we downhearted?" there would have been a very emphatic "No" in response.

And the confidence was justified by the event. Luton, it is true, did not win with anything much to spare, and at times there was a little weakness here and there, but on the whole the homesters were good value for their victory, and the exhibition they gave was vastly different from the display against the Queen's Park Rangers.

Southampton won the toss, but practically the only advantage accruing therefrom was that of playing with the sun behind them, the wind blowing across the ground and rendering very little assistance one way or the other. Both teams evidently appreciated the importance of the encounter, and the opening exchanges were something after the style of the preliminary sparring in a boxing match. Then Barnes got away from a fine long pass by Bob Hawkes and transferred to Pickering, who was robbed before he could do any damage.

White conceded a free kick, and Glen obtaining possession sent a little wide of the mark. Hands against McCurdy gave the visitors another opportunity of acting on the aggressive, but they were driven back, and Clawley was called upon to save from Pickering. A very fine shot, only a trifle wide, from Bob Hawkes was loudly cheered, and then Sandy Brown working his way down on to the goal-line, cleverly hooked the ball in, but Clawley was on the spot and brought off a very good save.

A corner for Luton proved fruitless, and a strange oversight on the part of the referee was worth something to Southampton, for Brown was making for goal when he was pushed in the back and in this way robbed of his chance. It was a clear case for a penalty, but the referee took no heed of the appeals, and the Saints no doubt congratulated themselves upon a lucky let-off.

Luton still pressing, Bob Hawkes was responsible for a fine centre, from which Warner tested Clawley with a beauty, whilst shortly afterwards the Luton captain was only a few inches wide of the mark with a very hot drive. Bob had evidently made up his mind that it was time Luton opened their account, and he was for taking anything that came to hand in the way of a chance.

Presently his efforts were rewarded. From a free kick, the ball came across from the right, and notwithstanding that he was a considerable distance from goal, Bob had no sooner received the ball than he let fly with all his might. The effect was electrical. The spectators watched the flight of the ball with amazement, and Clawley was reduced to impotence. He made a praiseworthy attempt to keep his goal intact, but it was of no avail, and the ball went straight into the net.

It was one of the grandest goals ever seen—a long shot, but sent in at such a terrific pace and with such suddenness that there was never the slightest fear of its being stopped. The spectators cheered enthusiastically, and the cordiality with which the players wrung the hand of their skipper showed how delighted they were at his success.

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After this, however, the Saints took a turn, and Radford skimmed the bar with a first-rate shot. Then Luton returned to the attack, Brown and Pickering leading the way, and Barnes was given a rare opening, which he failed to take advantage of, his shot being a very tame affair. Barnes and Schofield next got in good centres, and Pickering, who was offside, shot wide when such a feat seemed far more difficult than netting the ball.

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Brown, receiving from Warner, had rather hard lines in being offside when he sent in a shot which Clawley got to but could not hold, and Warner, in his passion for work, got over on to the left wing, taking a shot that ought to have been Pickering's, and amused the crowd by sending the ball over the bar, over the hoarding behind the goal, and right on to the roofs of the houses beyond.

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The Saints, who had been busily defending, were now able to turn the tide of battle, and several spirited assaults were made on the Luton goal, Moucher and Bowden being conspicuous with good shots. Then the onlookers had a great shock, for Radford dribbled the ball by McCurdy and had the goal completely at his mercy. Nothing, it seemed, could avert disaster, but just when people were prepared to see the ball quietly popped into the net, Radford shot and completely missed the mark.

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White afterwards gave a corner, which was not improved upon, and Luton going to the other end, Bob Hawkes took a free kick, and sent in a tremendous drive. The ball winged its way by the first lot of players, but was intercepted just against the goal-post. A centre by Schofield next looked promising, but Brown missed the ball, and the Saints retaliating, Glen shot just over the bar.

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Platt punted out a very good shot, and Jackson gave a corner. This was not turned to account, but a minute or so before the interval the Luton goal had a narrow escape, Platt stumbling as he was running across the goal to get to a shot from McLean. Luckily, he just recovered himself in time to save, and the teams crossed over with Luton leading by a goal to nil.

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So far the game, without being great, had been very interesting to watch, and the odd goal fairly represented Luton's superiority. The second half opened slightly in the visitors' favour, but Luton were soon renewing their overtures, Bob Hawkes setting them going, and Barnes and Pickering were strongly in evidence near goal. The latter was very deliberately pushed in the back when well within the penalty area, but again the referee failed to notice.

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Warner racing away from a pass by Schofield placed beautifully to Brown, who headed wide. Then the Saints made a brief but effective response. No one anticipated any danger, but Harris, left to himself for a moment and being placed in possession by Glen, took the opportunity and scored from fairly long range. It was a good goal, and Platt was not to blame for it, but though Harris's effort was something after the Hawkes' pattern, it was not of the same electrifying nature.

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This equalising of the scores made the spectators feel rather glum, and for a time the Southampton players tried hard to still further improve their position. After recovering from the effects of the unpleasant surprise, however, Luton re-asserted themselves and gave the Southampton defence a pretty warm time.

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From a lovely centre by Schofield, the ball glanced behind off Brown's head, and after the centre-forward had tried hard to convert another middle from Schofield, Bob Hawkes essayed a shot and sent high over. The cap-

tain, with Barnes and Fred Hawkes, figured in another assault, and Brown headed just wide, whilst after Clawley had saved from the Luton left wing, Clarke came as near as a toucher to putting the ball through his own goal, the custodian only saving in the nick of time against the upright.

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Luton were doing very well now, but they would have done infinitely better had they provided more work for the right wing. Schofield and Warner were literally pining for work, while Barnes and Pickering were all the time on the go. At last, however, there was an attack in which all the forwards had a share, shot after shot being attempted at very close range, and eventually it fell to Brown's share to do the needful.

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This proved to be the winning goal, and there was never any real danger of Southampton again getting on terms. Another very warm attack by Luton resulted in a corner, which Bob Hawkes took and placed behind, and Pickering soon afterwards threw away a good opening by making a weak pass when he ought to have gone through on his own.

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A centre by Schofield found Brown well placed, but Sandy missed the ball, whilst Barnes, who was given an excellent chance, waited too long, and his shot rebounded off an opponent. Apart from a save by Clawley, when Pickering endeavoured to turn another of Schofield's centres to account, there was nothing further of note, and the game ended in a well-deserved win for Luton by the odd goal of three.

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But though the home team gave a good account of themselves, they will be the first to admit they might have done better. As already stated, during a considerable part of the second half, they played too much a one-wing game, and as far as one could judge, that wing was not the more effective of the two. Barnes and Pickering performed well, except that the latter has not found his shooting boots yet, but the right wingers, whenever they were asked, showed that they were full of life and go, and Schofield never lost an opportunity of placing the ball to advantage.

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Warner seems to be thoroughly at home in his old position, and he only needs to moderate his exuberance when shooting in order to thoroughly establish himself in the good opinion of the crowd. Brown worked hard and well at centre-forward and if Sandy keeps pegging away he may return to that form which made him such a terror to opponents. He is certainly much faster now than he was in the latter half of last season.

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Of the halves, perhaps Fred Hawkes was the more consistent player. Bob was brilliant at times, and his goal was worth going a long way to see, but some of his passes were not quite as well-judged as usual. Still, he played a fine game. White was not at his best, and did not perform so successfully as against Fulham, nor did he give anything like the finished display that Jones did against Watford.

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But one of the features of the game was the grand show given by Jackson at back. McCurdy played a good game, as he always does, but Jackson took on himself the lion's share of the work and came off trumps. I don't think I should be exaggerating in the least in saying that he was the best back on the field, and the Luton directors are fortunate indeed in having unearthed so good a man. Platt in goal did all that was possible, being as smart and safe as usual.

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There seems to be general agreement that Fred Hawkes was the best of the halves, and I am not inclined to dispute it, but if such were really the case, how was it that the man behind him had so much more work than McCurdy and that the men in front of him had the ball so much less frequently than the left wing? Can anyone tell?

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Southampton are a good lot, but they are not the team they were in their championship days. Clawley is still a man to be reckoned with in goal, and the defence is not by any means weak. Clarke continues to show good form at back, and Bowden plays a fairly smart game at centre-half, but the halves generally were weak. The forwards, perhaps, are a bit above the average and require some holding, but taken altogether I cannot think the Saints will fully maintain their reputation.