

FOOTBALL NOTES AND NEWS.

By "Grasshopper."

SOUTHERN LEAGUE.

LUTON v. NORWICH CITY.

Once more Luton has managed to lose, being beaten by three goals to one by Norwich City, in the Southern League on Saturday. So the Blues have dropped almost to the bottom of the League table. The outcome of Saturday's match was a keen disappointment to the local supporters, but it was also a "bitter pill" to the players themselves. The result was indeed a strong contrast to the state of play; as a matter of fact, instead of the final being 3-1 against Luton, it should have been 3-1 in their favour. Thus, there is a little solace to be derived from the reflection that the best team again lost, and that the "Canaries" went home with a very big piece of "fat." We are constantly being assured that it is not always the best team that wins the game of football, and on Saturday we had a clear demonstration of it.

Luton have not played a better game this season than that of Saturday last. The wings seemed to have for once got into their stride, and they centred very prettily indeed. Schofield was particularly aggressive, and though Warner did great things in the field, he did not rise to the occasion when he had the chance. Twice at least he ought to have scored, but the shooting of the outside right was very erratic. Brown pleased his admirers and surprised his critics by giving a real good display. "Sandy" had not given such a good account of himself previously this season as he did on Saturday. The wags were observing that the cold weather had come; but whatever be the cause of it, one sincerely hopes that the centre-forward will keep up to this form. Barnes, on the extreme left, made some clever rushes, and in centring displayed accurate judgment; but, Pickering, his partner, appeared to be somewhat weak. True, he played an improved game, but he did not seem to be quite well, and missed one or two opportunities. Taken on the whole the forwards played all right, excepting in one important particular—they did not appear to be accurate in shooting, nor were they sometimes quick enough to take advantage of the openings presented.

Neither was there any fault to be found with the half-line. It may be that Fred White did not "shine," and that Captain Hawkes spoiled his exhibition by too much wandering, but Fred Hawkes has not played such a game for a long time. He was by far the best half on the field. Then we come to the backs. Jackson and McCurdy did very well. Of course the right back was greatly assisted by Fred Hawkes, and one is afraid that it is in this respect that McCurdy is handicapped. There may be a few who are not quite satisfied with the left back, but when the half in front will wander away over the field, there can be no wonder at seeing McCurdy get into "tight corners" at times. This was what Punch McEwen always complained about.

Then one comes to Platt. It is no use mincing matters. Luton's goalkeeper alone lost the match on Saturday. That was the unanimous verdict of those who witnessed the match. Platt has not come up to that high standard which characterised his efforts last season. He saves some difficult shots now and then — would that he would save the simple, easy ones! At least two of the shots which took effect on Saturday ought to have been easily cleared. But the custodian's tactics were bad, and his judgment very much at error to allow a football to go through his legs so tamely.

When Luton, who played against a strong wind, had succeeded in keeping their goal intact during the first half, it was confidently expected that on changing ends they would secure victory with comparative ease. And when Schofield opened the scoring shortly after the restart, the suspense appeared to be over. But then the unexpected happened. From the kick-off, the visitors took the ball up the field, and Ross beat Platt with a somewhat "fussy" shot. Oh! what a surprise. However, when shortly afterwards Ross, with the assistance of his partner Chalmers, put the Canaries ahead, there was consternation on all hands. Luton had practically all the play in the second half; for 20 minutes they literally bombarded the Norwich goal, but Thompson is as good as ever he was, and did some splendid work. Pickering, too, had to retire for a time, and this helped to weaken the home side. When Wood went clean through and scored the third goal, Norwich had practically secured victory. The visitors broke away but very few times, yet they seemed to meet with success on each occasion. It was not because of their play; their exhibition, save that of the left wing, was only ordinary. But Ross and Chalmers are towers of strength. Luton are sadly in need of a "shot" like Davie; we knew what he could do for Luton, until he was put in his wrong position. McEwen was not so conspicuous on Saturday as one has seen him, but he was, as usual, always safe.

When Luton kicked off, there were not 5,000 spectators present. But if things go on like this we need not expect to have even such a gate as that. In the first minute Thompson had to save a fine shot from Warner, and then Norwich attacked. This was not for long, however, and Thompson had again to look lively. Warner sent in a long shot which was too weak to cause trouble, although it went straight, and smart work by the Norwich forwards carried play to the other end. Ross was conspicuous for some brilliant individual efforts, and a grand shot from his foot nearly beat Platt. Play was very even for a time, the sound work of the backs on either side giving the forwards little chance of troubling the goalkeepers. However, the home side kept up the attack, and Thompson was always kept on the alert.

Norwich made frequent incursions into the Luton half, in all of which Ross was a conspicuous figure. For Luton Brown missed the goal by inches only. Norwich came near to scoring on two occasions from free kicks, Ronaldson making an excellent attempt following on a foul, whilst from a free kick for hands near the penalty line a goal might easily have accrued. Luton made a determined attack, and Pickering nearly scored with a grand shot soon before the interval, but at half-time there was no score.

With the change of ends Luton got the wind, and at once took advantage of it, setting up a continuous attack, which lasted quite ten minutes without relief. The Norwich backs defended well, and Thompson in goal made a series of fine saves. Brown showed a tendency to get offside, and spoiled many chances for his side. At last Luton opened the scoring, Schofield putting the ball through from a free kick, cleverly placed by Brown.

Norwich at once played up in better form, and a good run by their forwards ended in Platt saving at the expense of a corner. White cleared the resulting danger cleverly, and the play ruled fast and full of excitement. Schofield had hard lines in failing to score a second goal with a tremendously hard shot that was only a fraction wide of the goal. Within ten minutes, Norwich equalised through Ross, who took advantage of a weakness in the Luton defence.

Luton were almost the better side afterwards, and missed goals only by inches. Schofield once hit the bar. Pickering got hurt and retired; then Chalmers broke away, and Ross scored again for Norwich, the ball going through Platt's legs. A few minutes later Wood broke away, and added a third point.

Result: Norwich 3, Luton 1.