

Southern League.

LUTON v. WATFORD.

Played at Luton on Christmas Day. Result:

Luton 2 goals.

Watford nil.

Teams:—

Luton—Platt; Hogg and McCurdy; F. Hawkes, White, and R. Hawkes; Warner, Macdonald, Murphy, Pickering, and Barnes.

Watford—Biggar; Aston and Richardson; Badger, Hitch, and Fyfe; Soar, Turner, Niblo, Grimes, and Law.

Referee, Mr. C. C. Fallowfield.

It was a regular holiday crowd that assembled on the football ground on Christmas afternoon to witness what may almost be called the annual match at Luton with Watford. After having had a good dinner, there is nothing better for the average man than to get out into the fresh air and let it digest. But although he is generally in a good frame of mind after his Christmas dinner, if he goes to a football match his happiness is not complete unless he sees a good game and the team he favours having the best of matters.

This being so, the large majority of the 8,000 or more spectators present at the match on Christmas Day must have felt at peace with all the world. The game was, perhaps, the best contested and fastest seen on the Town ground this season, and the frequent cheering testified to the fact that the onlookers were having a good time. The spirit which animated the huge gathering was evidenced by the great amount of amusement caused by the blowing of a couple of small trumpets while the Volunteer Band was playing a selection prior to the match, and later on the chorus of "Neath the shade of the old apple tree" was taken up in different parts of the ground.

The game started something like a quarter of an hour after the advertised time, owing to the late arrival of the visitors. Something like 1,500 people made the journey from Watford in crowded compartments, and the train was so heavy that it did not get along very fast in the cuttings. The sun was shining brilliantly when the game started, and notwithstanding the coldness of the atmosphere, one could not complain of the weather for the time of the year.

Brown was absent from the Luton team, and his place was taken by Murphy, while Pickering partnered Barnes on the left wing. The visitors also had a re-arranged forward line, which included Turner, who at one time played for Luton, at inside-right. It would take too much space to give a full account of a game that was crammed with incident from start to finish, but I will endeavour to give a general idea of the run of the play, together with some of the outstanding features of interest.

As the reader is already aware, the result was a win for Luton by 2 goals to nil, but notwithstanding the position of Watford in the League, the wonder, taking into account the opportunities that came their way, is that Luton did not score two or three more. Right from the start Luton had the better of the exchanges, and within five minutes Warner and Macdonald found themselves on top of one another in the goal, wondering why the ball was not there too.

R. Hawkes almost scored later on, one of the backs miskicking in front of goal, and Soar seemed to be a certain scorer when McCurdy slipped in attempting to take a back pass by White. The outside-right rushed away, but Platt disposed of his shot. A few minutes afterwards Macdonald sent across the mouth of goal, and it seemed that the slightest touch from Pickering would put the ball through, but somehow the latter player failed to get at it.

Then Turner got through for Watford, and the referee allowed the point, but Luton at once appealed on the ground of offside, and after consulting one of the linesmen, Mr. Fallowfield altered his decision. Following a weak clearance by Platt, a Watford player had a good chance, but shot wide. Shortly before the interval Barnes headed in well, and Biggar was very smart in saving.

The teams crossed over without leaving the field, and Biggar, who had given a really fine exhibition, was loudly cheered as he took up his position at the town end. But for the screw on the ball, Warner would undoubtedly have scored almost directly, and a few minutes afterwards Pickering, who was playing well with Barnes so far as passing was concerned, made a bad miss. Macdonald was in a good position at the time, but did not interfere, as he evidently thought he was offside.

Up to this point the spectators had been very enthusiastic, and Luton's first goal was the cause of a scene unequalled on the ground for a long time. It was really the outcome of a corner taken by Warner. Fred Hawkes, who was standing in the midst of several players, tried to kick the ball through, but in some way it went out to Warner, who banged it into the opposite corner of the net from an almost impossible angle. This happened about twenty minutes after the change of ends, and cheers rent the air for ten minutes or so almost without a break.

There was good reason for it, Luton keeping up a fierce attack. At length Watford broke away, and Fyfe shot wide. A huge kick forward by Macdonald was reached by Warner, who banged it across the goal. Barnes met it and shot, but Biggar once more brought off a remarkable save. In the subsequent play he

was brought to his knees by Murphy and dropped the ball, but recovered it before any of the forwards could get there.

In an attack by Watford, White effectually prevented Turner from shooting. Luton took up the running again, and R. Hawkes tried one of his characteristic drives, which was rather wide of the mark. Warner, however, was handy and transferred to Pickering, who headed by Biggar close to the far post. From now to the end Luton fairly held the upper hand, but Biggar was equal to all emergencies.

The great strength of the Luton team was in the half-back line, both R. Hawkes and F. Hawkes being in their very best form. Barnes was the best forward, although Murphy and Macdonald put in a lot of work. Warner was very good, and he might have been given much more to do in the first half than was actually the case. Watford were good in defence, and their forwards were fast, but Niblo lost a lot of ground in keeping the ball too much.