

Southern League.

LUTON v. MILLWALL

Played at Luton on Saturday. Result:—

Luton 1 goal.

Millwall 1 goal.

Teams:—

Luton—Platt; Hogg and McCurdy; F. Hawkes, White, and R. Hawkes; Warner, Gittins, Brown, Fitzpatrick, and Barnes.

Millwall—Joyce; Shreeve and Stevenson; Frost, Comrie, and Blythe; Dean, Milsom, Twigg, Jones, and Hunter.

Referee, Mr. Bullimer (Northampton).

Having won five matches straight off the reel, Luton people expected the home team to bag the couple of points at stake on Saturday, and as was the case in the boat race, the Light Blues started strong favourites. But, unlike Cambridge, Luton did not come out winners, and from one point of view were rather lucky to escape defeat.

It was a regular March day. Overhead the sky was of a dull leaden colour, and a strong wind was blowing across the ground. The ball was constantly going out of play, and towards the finish, when Millwall were playing for a draw, Joyce took any number of goal kicks and the ball was repeatedly kicked over the threepenny stand.

In the first twenty minutes or so Millwall were distinctly the better team. They started off at a great pace, and Dean, the crack outside-right, got across some very dangerous centres. So well was Dean fed that the chief interest in the early stages centred in his struggles to evade Bob Hawkes, who was in fine form.

But although Millwall were much smarter than Luton at this stage, the home team got within shooting range now and then, and a few minutes after the start Warner took a flying shot, the ball going over. The most dangerous incident, however, occurred at the other end, where McCurdy fell over as he was about to intercept a pass, and Bob Hawkes had to give a corner.

Ten minutes from the start Fitzpatrick netted the ball after some good play with his partner on the left. Just before he scored, however, Brown touched the ball, and it was the centre-forward who was given offside. Millwall getting away again, Milsom put in a cross shot which went just over the bar.

As the result of a faulty kick by one of the Millwall halves, Brown got away with the ball, but when a few yards from goal, fell down. There were cries of "Foul," but the referee did not stop play, and a centre by Barnes was cleared. The next incident of note was a good clearance by F. Hawkes from one of Dean's centres.

When Dean put across again, however, his centre was turned to account. Jones and Hogg tried to head the ball and collided. The sphere went out to Hunter, who, being left to himself, had little difficulty in beating Platt. Both Hogg and Jones were attended to by the respective trainers before they resumed play.

This happened after twenty-five minutes' play, and no fair-minded man could say the goal was not deserved. A minute or two later Dean got across another centre, but Platt met it with his boot and kicked the ball away. And then Luton were credited with the strangest goal that has been scored on the Town ground.

Brown was following the ball, which had been sent well up the field, and Stevenson was trying to keep him off, when Joyce came out and tried to clear with one of his huge kicks. Sandy's head happened to be in the way, however, and the ball rebounded off him into goal, some yards away. The crowd cheered, but the centre-forward did not feel very well for some time afterwards, the blow almost stunning him.

* * *

Following a splendid clearance by Hogg, the Luton left wing got away in promising fashion, but Warner was prevented from taking advantage of the centre. Another corner fell to the lot of Millwall, but was cleared, and Gittins was fastening on the ball nicely when Frost prevented him from finding an opening.

*

A third corner for Millwall resulted from a free kick—it is strange that Luton only forced one corner during the whole of the match—and Platt had to be very smart to save a first-time shot by Hunter. At the other end Barnes got across a nice centre and Brown was ready for it, but the wind stopped the ball to some extent, and Joyce fisted it out.

* * *

Nothing more that was worthy of note happened before the interval. Perhaps Luton were rather lucky in being on level terms, but they had shown some improvement in the last ten minutes or so, and with the wind more in their favour in the second half, it was hoped that they would do better.

* * *

As a matter of fact, Luton did do the major part of the attacking after the interval, but Joyce was not hard pressed more than once or twice. The spectators behind the goal at the far end jeered him because of the leisurely way in which he took the goal kicks, and things got to such a pitch that, just before the finish, the referee thought it was his duty to speak to the spectators about their behaviour.

* * *

Almost directly after the resumption an accident happened to Bob Hawkes. Dean was trying to get rid of the ball, which came into contact with Bob's face, as also did Dean's boot. The Luton captain rolled over, but was up again next moment, like an indiarubber ball, and was attended by both trainers. He went off for a few minutes and returned with a piece of sticking-plaster on his nose and every promise of a nice black eye.

* * *

An opportunity came in the way of Gittins, but there was no force behind his shot, and when he made another attempt a little later Comrie got in the way. After Milsom had sent just over, Gittins did some travelling and transferred to Barnes, who followed Milsom's example.

* * *

Shortly afterwards, Barnes had a really fine chance of giving Luton the lead, but when close in shot the wrong side of the post. Warner next had a try and brought Joyce to his knees, but the goalkeeper saved his charge. Following a foul on Barnes, Brown went down in the penalty area, and Sandy and Stevenson had a bit of an argument.

* * *

From a free kick, Barnes put across a fast centre, which Brown missed and Stevenson just touched, thus preventing Warner from getting at it. Yet another attempt was made by Barnes, but he did not have time to steady himself and there was too much twist on the ball. The result was that it went wide.

* * *

In the last few minutes Luton had another chance to gain the two points. Stevenson was trying to prevent Brown from getting at the ball, when he handled it. The referee blew his whistle and motioned for a penalty. The Millwall players protested, and he consulted both linesmen, although it seemed that he had seen the offence himself.

* * *

The referee had no reason to alter his decision, and the penalty was taken by Bob Hawkes. The form of Joyce loomed large in goal, and the Luton captain tried to kick the ball into the right-hand corner, but it struck the post and rebounded into play. Just before the finish Fred Hawkes brought off a smart clearance when Twigg was getting dangerous.

* * *

Luton had no reason to complain as to the result, for although with a little luck they might have scored in the last half-hour, before then Millwall had given a very good exhibition. The great difference between the teams was at forward, Gittins and Fitzpatrick being off-colour. The former seemed to be done up long before the finish, and Fitzpatrick has not shown his best form in recent matches. Indeed, the two inside men have not played more than one really good game since, for some reason best known to themselves, the directors saw fit to make them change places.

* * *

At present there is no combination among the forwards, and not the slightest sign of it.

being brought about. Fitzpatrick's style of play is totally dissimilar to that of Barnes, and Gittins, who did give evidence of making a suitable partner for the outside-left, seems quite at sea on the right wing. Strangely enough, the only time the forwards have been allowed to go for some weeks unchanged is since the adoption of the policy of trying to make square pegs fit into round holes.

The Luton halves played well, but perhaps the best player on the home side was Hogg. He is rather inclined to use his weight at times, and two of the Millwall forwards showed great respect for him towards the close of the game, but his clearances were very good, and he relieved some threatening situations. Frost, the right-half, and Dean (outside-right) were the best men in the Millwall team.