

Southern League

LEYTON v. LUTON.

Played at Leyton on Saturday. Result:—

Leyton 1 goal.

Luton nil.

The teams were as under:—

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

Leyton—Skiller; Meredith and Ramsay; Bidmead, Moles, and Banks; Hesham, Evans, Turnbull, Busby, and Kelly.

Referee, Mr. G. H. Muir (Southampton).

Having already beaten Leyton three times this season, it was expected Luton would add to their Southern League record by notching two further points on Saturday. The forwards not having given satisfaction in recent matches, Pickering was restored to his old position to the exclusion of Fitzpatrick. Leyton have been doing great things since the new year dawned, and were not without hopes of winning.

McCurdy won the toss, and Turnbull kicked off with a light ball which played curious pranks on the hard bumpy pitch. At the start Luton got down through the agency of Warner, but the ball went for a goal kick, the final attempt being a weak one. Jones let in Busby by falling on the hard surface and hurting his knee, thus losing control of the ball. The Leyton inside player quickly turned the ball over to Kelly, and for a second or so it appeared likely the opening goal was coming, but after two or three narrow escapes the pressure was relieved by Evans putting high over the bar.

Warner again put in a good run and passed the ball across the field to Pickering, who attempted to work his way through without accomplishing that object, Meredith charging the ball down and succeeding in getting it away down the field. Brown tried a long shot from forty yards' range which Skiller easily disposed of, but as a rule the play was in midfield, big kicks from the backs being a great feature of the game at this stage.

Kelly got away in fine style and put in a great centre, which hit the extreme post and rebounded to Evans, who, if he had kept his head, should have scored, being close in, but Platt just managed to smother the attempt. Still the relief was only temporary, for an unfortunate slip by Hogg just after ended in what proved the only goal of the match—that is, one allowed by the referee; but more of

that anon. The ball on this occasion came from the Leyton right wing, and Platt would undoubtedly have prevented a score if Hogg had allowed the ball to reach him, for the custodian was not hampered in the least. But instead of this, Hogg attempted to clear while facing his own goal, and, to the surprise of all, he quietly placed the ball right out of his comrade's reach into the net. The game was some twenty-five minutes old when Leyton enjoyed this bit of luck.

Before half-time Leyton certainly had the easiest chances, but they failed badly with them, and, aided by a bit of luck, Luton prevented any further score. About the best attempt previous to the interval was a clever dribble on the part of Gittins, who finished with a good pass right across the mouth of goal, but Barnes unluckily ran the ball out.

In the first half Leyton had certainly proved themselves the better team, but in the second half Luton put more life into their work and were more often dangerous in consequence. Several corners fell to their share, but none were improved upon, at least, not in the early stages, and, as recorded later, the referee would not listen to their appeals when they did find the net. White tried a hard drive into the mouth of goal all along the ground, but Brown just got in its way, and not being able to turn round in time, could not recover possession. Gittins forced another corner, which was well placed, and two or three attempts were made to get the ball by Skiller, who managed to get to a promising shot from Pickering.

Barnes and Pickering made a nice run down, and the latter appeared likely to get clean through, but was pushed off the ball inside the penalty area without any notice being taken of the offence. With only some ten minutes to go, it was anybody's game, for Luton were now all over the home players, and it seemed only a question of time before the equaliser must come. Still no goal was forced until about three minutes before the finish.

Then a fine run by Warner culminated in a corner kick, which that player dropped right on the upright with Skiller in close attendance, and behold the ball was in the net. As the post which the ball hit was the nearest to Warner and the ball was resting in the net on that side, it must be patent to anyone that it must have touched some object after it came off the upright, for it was an impossibility to curl itself round the post after hitting it from the direction of Warner's original kick. As a matter of fact, Skiller turned it through himself, as practically every Leytonian present was

willing to admit. But although the Luton players did their best to impress this obvious fact upon the referee he would not heed their appeals, except to the extent of consulting one linesman, who frankly admitted he could not see the incident.

I understand after the match the other linesman was most emphatic in stating that it was a goal, and he was in a better position to see, but for some reason Mr. Muir did not consult him, and thus a point was literally given to Leyton. It was certainly hard lines to lose a match under such conditions, especially as this was the first Southern League match lost out of the last eight.

Platt had little to do, Hogg, except for his one slip, which was purely an accident, playing a fine game at full back. F. Hawkes proved himself the best half-back, but until the final twenty minutes there was the old weakness among the forwards, and first-time shots were conspicuous by their absence. Barnes and Pickering certainly brought the ball down the field in good style at times, but the old complaint of throwing these openings away manifested itself all through. During the later stages, however, the whole team seemed to put more heart into the game, and it was sheer hard luck a goal did not materialise more than once, while without question the result should have been a draw, as already mentioned.