

FOOTBALL.

SOUTHERN LEAGUE.

NORTHAMPTON v. LUTON.

POINT GAINED BY THE BLUES.

LUTON'S FRONT RANK WEAK

Luton Town's second Southern League encounter of the season took place last Saturday at Northampton, when a bustling game ended in a draw as under:—

LUTON	0 GOALS
NORTHAMPTON	0 GOALS

It was the Cobblers' third League match in six days, but a fine struggle was anticipated on the County cricket ground, which has been the scene of many battles royal between the two clubs, the customary Bank Holiday fixtures in past years attracting large and noisy, but very enthusiastic crowds. The arrangement by which Luton visit the bootmaking centre on Easter Monday has been broken, much to the disappointment of the supporters of both sides, but the pooling of the gates has survived and it is a pleasure to be able to record that although the game under consideration was not entirely satisfactory to the Lutonians, yet the directors were able to congratulate themselves upon their half share in the receipts, which totalled £200 9s. 4d.

Northampton's brilliant display earlier in the week when they defeated the Glaziers at Sydenham by 2—0 raised their admirers' hopes, but Luton's followers were not in a sanguine mood. Nevertheless they were not depressed by the possibility of a reverse, and patronised the excursion so freely that two trains had to be run to accommodate them. Blue favours were greatly in evidence and the people streamed steadily into the ground where some 6,000 enthusiasts had gathered before the struggle finished.

The visitors' team was the same as that which lost at Southampton by 2—1, after a sturdy struggle on the previous Monday, with the exception of our international captain, "Bob" Hawkes, appearing at left half in place of Jones. On the Cobblers' side the eleven that beat Crystal Palace was relied on, except that Benson reappeared at left back in place of Brittain.

The teams lined up in charge of Mr. A. Shallcross (Leek) as follow:—

NORTHAMPTON.

Cooch

Drennan Benson

Tirrell McCartney McDiarmid

Badenoch Platt Lessons Didymus Freeman



Rankin Pearson Brown Hall Walders

R. M. Hawkes White F. Hawkes

McCurdy Hogg

Platt

LUTON.

The morning in Northampton had been anything but encouraging, a drizzling rain falling, but the afternoon turned out more pleasant and rather sultry. The Cobblers put in their appearance first and it was apparent from the cheer they received that the crowd was thoroughly infected with the football fever. Bob Hawkes led his men out a minute later and the contingent from Luton tried unsuccessfully to outdo the home crowd in point of the volume of noise.

Bob Hawkes suffered that bad luck in the spin of the coin that is becoming almost proverbial in the town which is proud to own him as a native and McCartney decided to place his team with its backs to the town end of the pitch. Taking advantage of the privilege of starting the Luton forwards made tracks for the opposite goal immediately the whistle sounded and a long kick by Walders tempted Cooch out from beneath the crossbar. Northampton replied in a fashion that flattered their admirers and quickly put the Strawhatters on the defensive. The rearguard drove back the Cobblers' forwards, only to see them return a minute later, but Didymus recklessly shot wide.

The first couple of minutes was a long enough period to prove beyond doubt that the home front quintette were a more dangerous set than the five which formed the Luton attack. Northampton maintained their aggressive attitude and Platt missed the target in an attempt to extend his namesake. The Luton right wing carried operations to the opposite end of the field, but having reached their destination Walders gave Cooch little trouble with a powderless shot.

Sprightliness was the feature of the Cobblers' forwards at the start and they set the pace that was too hot to last, a pace which they were diplomatic enough to reduce later. Nevertheless they kept the opposing defence constantly busy, but, as usual, Hogg and McCurdy were as safe as rocks. Captain McCartney was presented with an opening, but his method of dealing with it could not be taken as an example to his men. Lessons, who covered a good deal of ground and displayed much bustle without very noticeable effect, was the victim of a foul just outside the penalty area, the resulting free kick finding its way into Platt's arms.

R. M. Hawkes, who possessed the distinction of being the only amateur of the 22 players, showed some of his trickiest work at this point and set Walders on the move. Everything looked promising until Pearson disregarded the offside restrictions and came under the notice of the referee. The same official expressed his disapproval of the mode of the Luton defence in stopping Lessons on an individual trip towards goal, but the home centre-forward found the opening he was waiting for a little later when, however, he found Platt made light of his headwork. Immediately afterwards the visiting defence found itself in a tight corner and Hogg resorted to the dangerous method of passing the ball back to the goalkeeper.

"Sandy" Brown, whose energy was not a very noticeable quality on this occasion, spurred towards goal alone, but Drennan put paid to his account without difficulty. Luton's most promising piece of work so far followed. Walders sent in a shot that beat Cooch, but Tirrell was standing against the post and saved the situation just in the nick of time. McCurdy having checked Lessons in another unaided attempt to lower Peter Platt's colours, Luton at last began to settle down better to their work and a pass by Bob Hawkes resulted in Pearson putting in a long but not altogether stinging shot that Cooch easily dealt with.

Hogg and McCurdy in turn put paid to the account of the Cobblers' front line, but the home backs found themselves unable for the minute to check Luton's right wing. Walders kicked the ball the wrong side of the post, however, and Rankin aimed too high with another shot that deserved a better fate. Brown was the only man to find the net all day which he did at this point with a smart shot, but the referee's whistle had sounded a moment before for offside. For the first time the visiting forwards displayed something approaching combination, and Walders looked like dropping in just the centre that was required when he had the misfortune to miskick.

Didymus tricked Hogg, but reckoned without White, who declined to allow him anything better than a corner, but from this the Luton goal had a narrow escape, Platt effecting a very smart save from a header close in. A second flag-kick against the blues was nullified by Bob Hawkes. The visitors were at this juncture holding their own well, to the delight of their followers. Walders accurately placed a nice centre that Cooch fisted away over the heads of the forwards who were assembling to turn it to account. The ball dropped into the mouth of goal from a clearance by McCurdy, and was pounced upon by Hall, who manoeuvred through his opponents for a good opening, but in the end missed.

A nippy movement carried the play into the other half of the field, where Platt received from Badenoch and headed on to the goal furniture. A corner against Bob Hawkes was cleared by the captain himself and McCartney returned over the bar. Hall performed similarly at the opposite end of the field. The visiting custodian was extended just before the interval by a long daisy-cutter by Lessons. The last-named also profited by a mis-kick of McCurdy's and passed to Badenoch, who dropped a very neat attempt in Platt's arms. Rankin looked like accomplishing his purpose unaided with a smart dribble, but he carried the ball too far and the teams crossed over with the score-sheet clean.

The home left wing was allowed to get right away early in the second half, but McCurdy placed his side out of danger by clearing away Freeman's centre. Luton were kept upon the defensive for a while, but the efforts of the Cobblers' forwards lacked sting. Fortune favoured the homesters when Drennan miskicked badly twice in succession, but was able to redeem himself by reason of the ball striking his head from a centre by Rankin. From his clearance Northampton were enabled to get into their stride again and Badenoch, who was being fed very freely, sent a beautiful shot into Platt's hands. A fruitless free kick against Hogg for handling was quickly followed by a smart long shot from McCartney that Platt cleverly disposed of.

An endeavour by Bob Hawkes to turn the tide with a hard drive that went a little wide was unsuccessful and a very determined attack was then made by Northampton. The Luton custodian punched away a shot from the foot of Badenoch, and immediately had to clear the ball as it rebounded off Didymus' head. For a short while the blues' goal was the scene of a desperate attack in which Platt's work was brilliant. The venue of play was then speedily changed, and Brown found himself with an opening that he might have converted had he been brisker. Rankin put in a fine centre which Benson made a mess of, but "Sandy" gave him plenty of time to recover. Just afterwards Luton's centre-forward had another chance that a little nippiness would have turned to account, but he allowed himself to be robbed by Benson.

This danger averted, Northampton dashed away towards the other goal where a neat centre by Badenoch brought Platt out-to-ast away. Benson

transferred a clinking middle by Rankin into the centre of the field and the finest chance of the whole match next fell to Platt, who had only the goalkeeper in front of him when he sent past the post. The Luton citadel experienced yet a luckier escape half a minute afterwards. Platt ran out to punch away a shot, but the ball bounced off his fists backwards and appeared to be travelling straight into goal when McCurdy, whose habit of dropping back under such circumstances is invaluable, cleared while standing under the crossbar. At this stage Northampton were having much the better of matters and no one could have grumbled had they scored, but the visiting defence refused to acknowledge defeat, and forced their opponents back time after time.

At last the blues' forwards got together again and transferred the ball to the other goal mouth, where Cooch saved cleverly from Hall. Free kicks for offside and hands brought other movements in the same direction to a speedy end but Rankin managed to get in a shot that served only to show up the Northampton goalie to advantage. Platt was called upon in the closing stages. He just tipped a shot by McCartney over the bar and punched out another from Badenoch. A fast game came to a finish with no goals scored.

For this fact Luton should reel very thankful, because it would be idle to attempt to deny that Northampton deserved to win. Therefore all honour is due to the sterling work of Platt, Hogg and McCurdy, who saved their side from defeat time after time. The half-back line was very useful, Bob Hawkes displaying the most skill, but the forwards were a complete disappointment. It is too early in the season yet to be able to judge of their capabilities, but on last Saturday's show, Luton could not hope to reach as high a place in the Southern League as they did during the past season. Nevertheless, I believe that the men are real footballers and I can only counsel patience until they settle down and have a better understanding of each other's methods.

The left wing has expected to be the star performers, but on Saturday it was the worst on the field. Rankin and Walders changed places after half-time, but the alteration meant no improvement. Pearson was irritatingly slow, but I am told that he has an injured leg in which he does not yet possess full confidence. "Sandy" Brown indulged his fault of lying offside to the fullest extent, and I overheard the sarcastic remark of a Northampton supporter, "He's spending his time offside." Hall and Walders were occasionally a useful pair, and Walders showed such an improvement upon his form in the practice matches that the directors will be well advised to persist in his selection for the first team.

To win a point on foreign soil is not a bad performance taken all round, but the Luton public has been expecting a lot from the new men, and they are impatient to see them at their best. Personally, I have every faith that very soon they will find their form and when they do so the club will have nothing to fear. The defence is particularly strong, and if only the forwards act up to their reputations the team will be well balanced and clever enough to win high honours in both League and Cup competitions.

GOALIE.