

Southern League

LUTON v. SOUTHAMPTON.

Played at Luton on Saturday. Result:—

Southampton		2 goals.
Luton		nil.

The teams were as under:—

Luton: Platt; Hogg and McCurdy; F. Hawkes, White and R. Hawkes; Rankin, Hall, Brown, Farrant and Latheron.

Southampton: Lock; Eastham and Glover; Johnston, Thorpe and Hadley; Bainbridge, Jefferis, Harrison, Costello and Hodgkinson.

Referee:—J. W. Rowbotham (Nottingham).

Luton's first home match in the Southern League was not a very brilliant affair, regarded from the point of view of the Town Club. After the success achieved by the alterations made in the forward line in the second friendly with Watford, it was hoped that Luton would show to much more advantage than they did in the initial match of the season, especially as the men from the seaport town had been doing none too well in the meantime.

But the fond hopes of the supporters of the Luton Club were doomed to disappointment. Southampton, too, had made changes in their forward rank, Jefferis being transferred to inside right while Costello was included at inside left. These changes brightened up the attack considerably and Lock—who made his first appearance in goal for the Southampton first team—being an improvement on Burrows, the visitors played their best game of the season so far.

On the other hand Luton did not perform nearly so well as they did at Southampton and the score was hardly enough to show the difference between the teams. The men in the red and white shirts were a fine strapping set of fellows, always on the alert and ever ready to adapt themselves to circumstances. Luton, however, seemed to be much too slow, and this was especially the case with regard to the forwards. The halves were over-worked and the whole team did not play well enough to inspire confidence, although for a short period in the second half they gave promise of better things.

Right from the commencement—Thorpe won the toss and elected to kick towards the town end—Southampton adopted an open style of play and the attention of the home defence was very largely occupied in spoiling their attacks, indeed the Luton forwards never seemed likely to get away except when they were able to take advantage of a particularly good clearance by one of the backs.

It was an unpalatable fact that whereas Platt was rather busy quite early in the game, Lock only touched the ball twice in the first quarter of an hour and even then it was easy for him to dispose of a centre by Latheron who had sent the ball too far forward. On the first occasion when Lock saved a centre by Latheron the ball went off Glover's leg towards goal but the custodian was too smart for Brown.

Before this Platt had been deservedly applauded for saving a shot by Jefferis, for it was an attempt which would have beaten a good many goalkeepers. Soon afterwards Bainbridge got the better of McCurdy, and Harrison made an attempt from fifteen yards range, but Hogg's head was in the way. A few minutes later Hodgkinson was hurt, but continued playing. Then Costello shot over after he had beaten Hogg.

Curiously enough the first corner of the match was obtained by Luton, but it was soon cleared. Shortly after Farrant shot a little wide after Brown and Hall had worked the ball forward, but the most dangerous situation so far came about at the other end, where Platt rushed out to clear. The ball was quickly returned to the goal mouth and Harrison, who was almost on the goal line, was waiting for it to drop on his head, when McCurdy got there and cleared.

But Southampton's first goal was not much longer in coming, Bainbridge meeting the ball as it came across from the left and scoring with a shot which completely beat Platt. This occurred after twenty-five minutes' play, and a minute later the Southampton players strongly appealed for a penalty—a shot by Bainbridge having struck Hogg on the arm—but the referee merely gave a corner kick to Southampton.

The visitors really were unfortunate in not scoring more than one goal in the first half, for in addition to what has already been recorded, Costello beat Platt, but the ball rebounded from the under edge of the bar. At the other end Farrant had a chance to rush through, but the ball canoned off Glover. After this a free kick was given against Luton for a neat bit of handling by Latheron and the last incident of the first half was a good shot by Hall. One of the backs got in the way and the result was a fruitless corner.

Although Southampton were the first to get away after the resumption, Luton showed a welcome improvement and had the better of matters for ten minutes or so. Once they might have scored, but Brown was offside, and Rankin, who was in a fairly good position, did not see Hall's pass in time to take advantage of it.

Hall next had a glorious chance given him by Brown, but Lock saved smartly, giving a corner. In the course of subsequent play, F. Hawkes tried to get through, but finished with a weak shot. A minute later R. Hawkes almost took Lock unawares with a magnificent drive from thirty yards range.

Whilst these incidents were happening, the spectators cheered loudly, and it really seemed for a time that Luton stood a very good chance of equalising, but Southampton were not eclipsed for long, and the home goal soon underwent some narrow escapes. Hogg only just prevented Costello from getting in a shot, and F. Hawkes saved the situation by clearing. After that both Costello and Jefferis had chances, but shot wide. Luton taking up the running, Brown put in a good shot, but just as Lock was saving the whistle went. Once more the Luton centre was offside. A good attempt by Latheron was well gathered by Lock, and Southampton returned to the attack. Hogg was again prominent, for he repeatedly got the better of Hodgkinson and Costello, but once he made a mistake, which resulted in Bainbridge shooting over.

A little later Harrison sent in a flying shot, which went by the corner of the goal, and then Bainbridge was presented with another opening. This time he kept the ball low, but it went on the wrong side of the far post. Luton getting away, Hall essayed a shot, but it was too high to be effective.

Southampton's second goal was scored eight minutes from the finish, and it was obtained

by Costello. The attack did not look particularly dangerous, but Costello found himself unmarked about fifteen yards from goal, and let fly. Although the shot was rather unexpected Platt made an effort to get at the ball, which went in near the post.

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Any hope, so far as Luton were concerned, was now clearly out of the question. It is true that in the few remaining minutes Latheron secured a corner, and also took part in a movement which was spoiled by Hall making a mistake in trying to back-heel, but long before Costello scored Luton were a beaten team, and people had begun to leave the ground with looks of disappointment on their faces.

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Yet another game had been lost by the home forwards, who had clearly been outplayed. Hall was as active as any of them, but his passing towards the finish was by no means perfect. Latheron got across some good centres, but his partner was a failure, and Rankin never seemed to get a chance to do anything, while Brown was either offside or yards too slow.

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It was the most disheartening show given on the Luton ground for a long time, and one began to wonder what the directors could do to bring about an improvement in the vanguard, for it was patent to all present that something would have to be done.

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For once in a way very little can be said in praise of the Luton halves, but this is partly due to the fact that they received little or no help from the forwards, though White failed badly all through. Had it not been for the backs Luton's defeat would have been much heavier, and Platt played well in goal. Southampton were superior in practically every department, but the half-backs were the best part of the team.