

Football Notes and News.

By "Grasshopper."

SOUTHERN LEAGUE.

LUTON v. WEST HAM.

Once more the Blues "went under" on Saturday, this time to West Ham, whom they met on the Ivy-road enclosure, the final score being three goals to love in favour of the visitors. Now things look about as black as they possibly could. We are well at the bottom of the League, though there may be some comfort in the fact that we are in good company, Crystal Palace and Portsmouth being our next neighbours, but they are both above us. Out of five matches played we have only secured one point, and that accrued from a lucky draw. During the last two home matches Luton have had five goals scored against them, while they have not succeeded in once finding the net. We are told, of course, that the Town has been in quite as bad a position before—that once we were at the bottom of the League at Christmas, and then finished the season in a respectable position. Ah! One would like to believe that we are going to repeat the performance this season—and everyone wishes we may—but perhaps we have not the same material this year as we had then.

Owing to the fact that both Hogg and Pearson were on the injured list, Luton had to rearrange their side, and the teams turned out as follows:—

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

West Ham: Kitchen; Grant and Taylor; Allison, Watson, and Young; Lee, Grassam H. Stapley, Kemp, and Blackburn.

Some dissatisfaction was expressed at the decision of the directors to put Jones at back, and the wags were remarking that we should see Sandy in goal next, with Hogg centre-forward. The question generally asked was why White was not put in Hogg's position. He has played some sterling games at back before, but to put Jones there had the effect not only to weaken the team, but to make the player look ridiculous as well. It will be noticed that Moody was included in the home ranks. Considering that he has not had any training this season, Bert played fairly well; indeed, speaking of the forwards, he was the best of a bad lot.

Luton really lost the game from the point when the first goal was scored against them. In the first moiety they had the sun in their eyes, but the wind was with them. West Ham were fortunate in getting the first point, though it must be admitted that the wing man did well in beating four men through a misunderstanding on their part. Up to then—half-an-hour from the start—the Blues had had the best of matters, but from that point they played a losing game. West Ham's second goal, obtained in the first minute after re-starting, was an absolute fluke, and was due entirely to the fault of the home backs. The third goal by Stapley, however, was "a beauty," as fine a goal as has been scored on the new ground. Of the Luton men, one need only mention the two Hawkes's—Bob put in some neat bits of work, and "Fred" was always where he was wanted. Rankin is a long time coming on form, Hall was weak, Latheron was much off colour on Saturday, and Sandy——!

Coming to details, West Ham were the first to make headway. Stapley rushed down the centre till robbed by Hawkes. Then for some time Kitchen was kept fully employed, being twice called upon to fist away. Then West Ham forced a corner off Jones. Blackburn placed this nicely in front of goal, but the ball was cleared. After a spell of mid-field play, Luton returned to the attack. Rankin tested Kitchen with a strong drive, but the visiting goalkeeper was equal to this, and to other shots which crowded upon him. The luck of Luton was right out, Moody being especially unfortunate. Close on half-time West Ham broke away. Rankin missed his kick, and Grassam, taking advantage of a misunderstanding between the backs, was able to open the score.

On resuming, play opened sensationally, for West Ham immediately worked down the field. Lee, on the extreme right, sent across a centre, which White misjudged. Stapley, profiting by his mistake, pounced on the ball and scored a second goal before two minutes of the half had passed.

At the other end, Fred Hawkes tested Kitchen, who punched away. He brought off another smart save from Hall, and then play was transferred, and Lee tested Platt with a difficult shot. Luton now were consistently attacking, but showed little method in their efforts. Twice Moody had possible chances of breaking through, but nothing came of them. When West Ham did break away, their forward play was in striking contrast with that of the home forwards. Stapley received the ball and from 20 yards out scored a brilliant goal.

Result: West Ham, 3 goals; Luton, nil.