

Southern League.

LUTON v. MILLWALL.

Played at Luton on Saturday. Result:—

Luton 3 goals.

Millwall 1 goal.

Teams:—

Luton—Platt; Hogg and Dimmock; Jones, White, and R. Hawkes; Rigate, F. Hawkes, Pearson, Moody, and Walders.

Millwall—Joyce; Shreeve and Sutherland; Frost, Comrie, and Blythe; Hunter, Milson, Twigg, Jones, and Johnson.

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

It was not with any great degree of confidence that the supporters of the Luton Club looked forward to the match with Millwall, for the Light Blues were only one from the bottom position on the table, while the Dark Blues were four from the top. Moreover, the visitors had recently been victorious at Luton in a Western League match.

Both teams were practically at full strength, Pearson being included in the Luton team at centre-forward, and Twigg, the well-known goal-getter, occupying a similar position in the ranks of the visitors. McCurdy was an absentee from the Luton team again, and his place was taken by Dimmock. Although the weather was fine there were not more than five thousand spectators. The ground was very heavy, but the play throughout was fast, both sides going for all they were worth.

Pearson kicked off, and Luton were fortunate enough to score in the first minute. Following a throw-in, Jones kicked the ball across and Moody touched it with his head. The sphere seemed likely to go out of play, but Joyce attempted to gather it near the upright. He did not obtain control of the ball, and F. Hawkes, being well up, kicked it into the net.

After this Joyce saved from Walders, and Platt having negotiated an attempt by Twigg, F. Hawkes tested the Millwall custodian with a hard shot. Joyce was not able to hold the ball properly, and if any of the Luton forwards had been on the spot a second goal must have resulted, but only a corner accrued.

A long shot by Pearson was the next feature of note, and then White tried his luck. The sphere rebounded from the bar, and F. Hawkes promptly scored the second goal of the match within ten minutes of the start. The inside-right seemed to be offside, but Joyce certainly attempted to "play" the ball when it struck the bar, and probably touched it; otherwise offside must have nullified.

Two goals for Luton so early in the game looked very promising, especially as the home players had shown such good form in the opening exchanges. As the time went on, however, Millwall improved. They managed to get through once before the interval, and but for the smart work of Platt, would have been on level terms when the teams crossed over.

Twigg sent wide from a free kick, and then Hunter shot just by the far post; a few inches would have made all the difference, for Platt was at the other end of the goal. In the next few minutes Dimmock put in some good work in front of his own goal, but the most dangerous attempt at this period was made by Rigate, who sent in a splendid shot. Joyce happened to be in the way—fortunately for Millwall.

Twenty minutes from the start Twigg scored Millwall's only goal. It was a fine effort. He received near the middle of the field between the two backs, and raced away. When about twenty yards from Platt he let fly with a low shot. The Luton goalkeeper got to the ball, but let it go over the line. Onlookers thought that Platt was to blame for allowing the shot to score, but if that were so he made full atonement by giving a grand display during the remainder of the game; indeed, it is not too much to say that Luton owed their victory to him as much as, if not more than, to any other man in the team.

Walders and F. Hawkes narrowly missed finding the target, forcing a couple of corners between them, and then the Millwall outside forwards became prominent, but their efforts were frustrated by Dimmock and Platt, who brought off a really grand save from Hunter.

The last incident of note before the interval was an attempt by Twigg, who got away on his own. Hogg headed out, and one of the half-backs cleared. There were many similar situations in the second half, and time after time it seemed that Millwall must score. They were certainly the better team in the latter moiety.

On one occasion when Platt was saving from the Millwall outside-left, the ball curled up out of his hands, but he caught it again. Luton then got away, Walders preventing the right back from getting in his kick, and passing to Rigate, who forced a corner.

A minute later the Luton outside-right put across a centre, which Joyce met with his right foot. It was well for his side that he did, for if he had attempted to gather the ball in all probability F. Hawkes would have got in a kick and thus performed the hat trick.

Frost almost scored with a free kick, a fast low shot travelling by the post. Then Rigate accepted a pass by Pearson, and tried to get at close quarters so as to make a goal practically certain, but before he got in what was to be his final kick, Shreeve rushed across and cleared in brilliant fashion, albeit the ball went out of play.

As the time wore on, chief interest centred in the forward play of the visitors. Once after Luton had taken a corner, Johnson got away nicely, but Hogg prevented him from troubling Platt by kicking behind. After this Platt did well to save from Johnson, and one of the best saves of the match was brought off a minute later, when the Luton custodian saved a hard shot from the inside-right, who seemed certain to score.

Half-an-hour from the finish a mist came over the ground and gradually developed into a fog. It became increasingly difficult to follow the flight of the ball, which might at almost any moment have found a resting-place in the net behind Platt.

Slowly the minutes went by, and yet Millwall did not score. The hope that Luton would gain the two points caused the spectators to long for the end to come quickly. The end did come eventually but before then Luton had added to their score. A centre by Walders was met by F. Hawkes, and Pearson having shot, Moody assisted the ball over the line with his foot.

This was in the last minute of the game—a very curious fact seeing that Luton had scored in the first minute. The game was a terribly hard one from beginning to end, and there were very few dull moments. How the players kept up the pace on the heavy ground is a mystery, and special credit is due to the visitors, who were certainly the better team in the second half, though the only goal scored during that period went to Luton.

So long as they kept the ball going from wing to wing and played the open game, Luton held their own, but when they gave this up for short passing, Millwall were able to get the pull. By hugging the ball so closely, the Luton forwards delivered themselves into the hands of the Millwall halves, who played with any amount of dash, and were able to rush in and intercept the passes of the home forwards.

Pearson did not get much luck, but he worked well and gave a very good account of himself. Fred Hawkes, too, was in fine form, and the crowd would have been only too delighted had he succeeded in performing the hat trick. He came very near it, a shot of his only just failing soon after he had scored his second goal. Rigate is improving wonderfully at outside-right, and not much fault can be found with the left wing. Moody was in excellent form, and though fortune does not smile on Walders, that player put in some very useful work.

The halves, as usual, served their side well. The captain sometimes electrified the spectators with his brilliant touches. White was a worrier all the way, and Jones was as indefatigable as ever. The backs were not quite up to concert pitch, Dimmock being a little erratic at first, and Hogg having a spell of unsteadiness in the second half. Platt was no doubt at fault with Millwall's goal, but after that he gave a magnificent exhibition.

By the way, what sort of sportsman, nay, what sort of partisan, is that man who, when the goalkeeper in his own team has the misfortune to make a mistake, afterwards shouts ironically each time the ball comes his way, "Let it go." There were several of such "sportsmen" on Saturday, and their ill-natured gibes might have been the means of Luton losing the game. Fortunately, they had not the effect calculated. On the contrary, Platt, as I have said, subsequently gave a marvellous exhibition, and proved to be one of the chief factors in the home team's success.

The Millwall forwards were in great form, Hunter and Twigg being the shining lights in a very bright attack. The halves and backs also played extremely well, and the team certainly did not deserve to lose by a margin of two goals.

Not a single visiting team won a Southern League match on Saturday, but Bradford drew at Brighton at 1 goal all. The other results were:—Crystal Palace 2, Brentford 1; Swindon 4, Bristol Rovers 1; Tottenham Hotspur 1, Leyton 0; Queen's Park Rangers 1, Reading 0; West Ham United 2, Watford 0; Plymouth Argyle 1, Norwich City 0; Southampton 2, Northampton 0; Portsmouth 3, New Brompton 2.