

The English Cup.

LUTON v. FULHAM.

Played at Luton on Saturday. Result:—

Fulham	8 goals.
Luton	3 goals.

Teams:—

Luton—Platt; Watkins and McCurdy; Jones, White, and R. Hawkes; Rigate, F. Hawkes, Rankin, Moody, and Walders.

Fulham—Skene; Ross and Lindsay; Collins, Morrison, and Goldie; Threlfall, Dalrymple, Harrison, Millington, and Mouncher.

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

The match played on the Bury Park enclosure on Saturday will long be remembered by all who were present. The snow-covered and frost-bound ground was so slippery that some time elapsed before the players could get used to the unusual conditions. The goal-scoring, too, was phenomenal; indeed, eleven goals is the highest total scored in any match in which the Luton first team has been engaged since the ground was opened.

The game was almost bewildering. As soon as play started the spectators laughed heartily as one player after another slipped over in trying to get at the ball. Three goals were obtained in the first eleven minutes, and afterwards the score was increased at short intervals, no fewer than seven being registered before half-time.

No one expected to see such a game. The match had been one of the chief topics of conversation during the week, and all sorts of conjectures were made, but no one anticipated such a high score. It was generally agreed that Fulham should win, but a great portion of the supporters of the home club hoped that by adopting Cup-tie methods, Luton would just manage to get into the second round.

This hope seemed to be justified a few minutes after the game opened. The Luton captain lost the toss, and the home players had to face the sun, but were the first to attack. Three minutes after the start R. Hawkes swung the ball across, following a throw-in, and F. Hawkes headed to Rigate, who steadied himself and shot into the net at the far side, giving Skene no chance whatever.

This early success was received with loud cheering, but only another four minutes elapsed before Fulham equalised. Platt left his goal to stem an attack on the right. The ball went across to Mouncher, who was standing close to the post. Everybody thought he would score, but perhaps he was hampered by Watkins. Anyhow, he kicked the ball across the mouth of goal, and the credit of putting it through went to Dalrymple.

Shortly afterwards Millington had a splendid chance to score, but sent the ball over. At the other end Walders put in a stinging shot which Skene was only just able to save, and Rankin put the ball through, thus placing Luton in front again. The spectators were jubilant, and for several minutes every kick by a Luton man was cheered.

But as the time wore on it became more and more apparent that Fulham were determined to win if they could. Notwithstanding the conditions, their passes almost invariably went to the right men, and the sterling work of the halves gave the forwards plenty of opportunities to test Platt. The surprises of the first few minutes caused the forwards to forsake their usual methods. Instead of indulging in pretty passing, they shot at every possible opportunity.

Time after time Platt saved shots which deserved to score, and he was equally alert in clearing corner kicks. But such determined play on the part of the attack could only have one result, and Fulham fully deserved the point they obtained when Harrison scored before Platt had recovered after saving a clipping shot by Dalrymple.

A free kick for Luton as the result of a foul on Rigate at the side of the penalty area might have been turned to account, but it was cleared. A minute or two later Rigate put across a good centre, and Rankin seemed a likely scorer, but the ball touched the post and went out of play. At the other end Harrison shot wide when he was 15 yards from goal and unmarked.

Considering the conditions, it was a good struggle, but Fulham were the better team at this juncture. The goal by means of which they obtained the lead was one of the best ever seen on the ground. A back pass by one of the forwards was accepted by Morrison, who got in a tremendous drive from twenty yards' range, the ball breaking the back of the net. This happened after play had been in progress 25 minutes.

Two minutes later Threlfall centred, and R. Hawkes tried to prevent Harrison from getting at the ball, but the centre-forward trapped it as it came across and sent it flying into the far corner of the net. It was a clever piece of work, and reminded one of Woodward at his very best. Shortly before the interval Millington scored Fulham's fifth goal, and although Moody caused Skene to give a corner in saving a hard shot, Fulham were leading by three goals at half-time.

But although the margin was so great, there was hope for Luton in the early part of the second half. Before the game pieces of felt had been put on the soles of the boots of most of the home players, but it was found that Bob Hawkes, who had ordinary leather studs, could keep on his feet much better than the others. During the interval the felt was taken off the boots of the other men, and after the resumption they played with more confidence.

If only Luton had had a bit of luck at this period, the result might have been affected. The Luton players tried hard for about a quarter of an hour, during which period Skene had more work to do than Platt, and they were credited with another goal, Moody heading through. Mr. Muir seemed to have some doubt about the legitimacy of the point, but allowed it after consulting one of the linesmen.

To be two goals down half-an-hour from the finish of such a game was not a very desperate position to be in, but whatever hopes the supporters of the Luton team had, they were doomed to disappointment. A couple of minutes after Moody scored, Harrison was making tracks for the Luton goal when he was brought down by Watkins only a few yards from Platt. Of course, a penalty kick re-

sulted, and Ross scored with a shot which no goalkeeper could have saved except by chance.

After this, Luton were a beaten team. On one or two occasions they seemed to have opportunities, but they put no heart into their efforts. On the other hand, Fulham, who, it is said, had rubber soles on their boots, seemed to be able to do practically what they liked, and with better shooting might have scored more goals. Harrison made a bad miss from a centre by Mouncher, and Threlfall shot wide with an open goal in front of him.

The seventh goal was scored ten minutes before the finish by Dalrymple, who should not have been allowed to get in his shot, as three or four Luton players were near him. Five minutes later Millington rushed up the field to meet a forward pass, and shot the ball past Platt. Long before this the spectators had given up all hope of seeing Luton share the honours with Fulham, but they were not downhearted; in fact, everybody seemed to be quite cheerful, and certainly no one could grumble about not having value for money.

Although I think it probable that Fulham would have been victorious under any circumstances, I am decidedly of opinion that the directors have only themselves to thank for the extent of the defeat. On what principle they acted when Watkins was selected to fill Hogg's place at back, I cannot for the life of me conceive, seeing that Dimmock has proved himself an infinitely better man.

Some may say that it is easy to be wise after the event. Well, I happen to have the poor consolation of knowing that the view now expressed is the one to which I gave utterance when the news reached me of the unfortunate selection made. A director, however, laid it to my charge that the "News" had never given Watkins a fair chance, and for that reason I refrained from criticism. It need hardly be said that I have no feeling of any kind against Watkins, and had his performance justified his inclusion on Saturday no one would have been more pleased than myself.

But, as I say, his inclusion is quite incomprehensible. Up till Christmas reliance had been placed upon Dimmock as reserve back, and only once had he failed to come up to expectation. I am told that he was not in the best of form at Leyton, but in every other instance he had played so well that the man whose place he took was not missed. If men were always discarded for one indifferent display, I wonder how many would have been taking part in Saturday's match?

A player who knows as much about Watkins' abilities as any man in Luton, told me that against a kick-and-rush team Watkins might come off, but when he saw he had been chosen to play against Fulham's clever and tricky forwards, he knew at once what a tremendous mistake had been made. And his knowledge received ample confirmation before the game had been long in progress. Watkins got in two or three decent kicks at first, but when the Fulham forwards once settled down to their work he might just as well been off the field for all the good he was.

Unhappily, his ineffectiveness had a demoralising effect on McCurdy, who shaped better than any man on the field to start with, and afterwards fell away to nothing. Then Bob Hawkes alone among the half-backs did himself justice, and altogether the Luton defence, apart from Platt, made a very sorry show. Platt was decidedly at fault with Fulham's first goal, but it was the only mistake he made during the game.

If the defence had not let Luton down so badly, the forwards might have done great things. They certainly began well, but were too easily discouraged. Rankin especially was all energy in instituting a movement, but soon surrendered to opposition, and gave to sliding the time that could have been more usefully employed in attempts to recover the ball. Otherwise, the forwards seemed to be the victims of misfortune, but at the same time they did not compare at all favourably with the Fulham quintette, the members of which were for the most part sturdy, clever, and determined.

Curiously enough, the credit for Fulham's victory went for the most part to Morrison, who was only included in the team at the last moment. He it was who pulled the men together when it was most needed, and he it was who put grit into the Fulham attack when the absence of it might have made a world of difference to the result. But when Fulham once got their nose in front, they proved themselves to be a fine team, with scarcely a weak spot anywhere.

By the way, why was it that the visitors were able to keep their feet better than the home team? Was it because of the confidence begotten of success, or was it because they were better shod? With the advantage of playing at home, Luton had no excuse for not being fully prepared.