

Southern League.

WEST HAM v. LUTON.

Played at Upton Park on Saturday.
Result:—

West Ham 1 goal.
Luton nil.

The teams were as under:—

Luton—Platt; Hogg and McCurdy; F. Hawkes, Jones, and R. Hawkes; Rigate, Rankin, Pearson, Moody, and W. Porter.

West Ham—Kitchen; Hammond and Taylor; Allison, Piercy, and Young; Frost, Shea, H. Stapley, Watson, and Blackburn.

Referee, Mr. A. Shallcross (Leek).

Luton's re-constructed side at West Ham caused more confidence than some recent selections, but once again nothing more tangible than hard luck resulted from their efforts. Hogg was able to resume his place, having recovered from a strained thigh, while White's position was occupied by Jones, who was flanked by last season's regular wing halves. Some interest was aroused through the inclusion of W. Porter, of the London Caledonians, at outside-left, he making his initial appearance in Luton colours. The principal changes in the home team were at outside-right and right back, Frost taking the first-named post; indeed, it was his first appearance since his transfer from Chelsea, although he is better known as a Northampton player. Gault was rested in view of the approaching Cup-tie, and Hammond took his place.

The kick-off had been advertised for three o'clock, but so unpromising was the outlook that the officials ordered the commencement several minutes earlier; indeed, when Stapley started the game it was extremely doubtful if the match would last the regulation time, for fog was in evidence at one end particularly. The first attack came from Blackburn on the left, he just saving a pass from the centre going into touch, and taking the ball down the wing, wound up with a centre which, however, went behind for a goal kick.

A nice pass from F. Hawkes gave Rankin an opportunity to force the game, and he sent Rigate away in good style. The ball was returned to Pearson, who promptly transferred to Porter, but unfortunately the latter's shot was a trifle too far forward and the ball struck the side net. It was a pretty movement and really deserved a better fate, but Porter had to take the ball on the run and could not quite manage to square it across. Luton were doing most of the attacking at this stage, and Rankin all but got through a minute later, but Taylor managed to get in the way and block Rankin's shot, the ball going out for a corner, which Rigate placed behind. A fine chance fell to Rigate when R. Hawkes cleverly passed the ball across the field, seeing his outside-right unmarked, but Rigate made a wild kick and sent the ball yards wide instead of steadying himself, and he thus lost a fine opportunity.

It was rather a surprise for the local spectators to find Luton so aggressive, seeing their lowly position in the League, but for all their attacking they had nothing to show, and if the truth must be told Kitchen had rather a quiet time between the sticks, all the efforts of the Luton forwards fizzling out at the critical moment. From a free kick against Allison, Moody headed the ball to Pearson, who was well placed for a shot, but he sent it yards over, amid ironical cheers from the spectators.

Luton were soon down again, and Rigate put the ball along the ground just in front of Kitchen, but neither of his inside comrades could quite reach it, and it appeared to be travelling over the line when Porter just managed to get it back and place in front. Kitchen, however, pounced on the centre and saved what appeared almost a certain goal. As it happened, no goal would have been allowed, for the referee blew his whistle and gave the Hammers a goal kick, apparently thinking the ball was over the line when Porter brought it back, but in this he was mistaken, Porter stating after the match that he was well inside play when he took the ball.

Stapley, as usual, was ever on the alert for an opening, and on one occasion he came out from a crowd of players with the ball at his toe, but he was a trifle wide and could only manage a cross drive, which Platt sent down the field with a big kick from the goal-mouth. Previous to this Platt had been very little troubled, but he had some warm work to get through immediately after. Frost sent in a long shot, which Platt just succeeded in fisting away, but could not get out of danger, and for a moment it seemed a goal must result, but ultimately danger was averted by one of the attacking side sending behind.

Several corners fell to Luton's share, but no advantage came from these, while a foul by Piercy on Rankin just outside the penalty area also proved abortive; indeed, it really helped the Hammers, for Jones, who took the kick, badly shook up his weak ankle and was of little use afterwards. Moody tried to beat Kitchen close in, but the custodian got to the ball and prevented it passing through. At the opposite end Platt brought off a fine save from a drive by Stapley, only to have the ball returned by Allison. This time Platt conceded a corner, and Blackburn placed right into the goal-mouth, Shea netting from Platt's save.

Naturally, a big shout went up for a goal, but the referee, who was, of course, standing on the line, had previously given the ball out, a decision which met with the approval of the linesman. The crowd for a time could not understand it at all, for no whistle had gone, and as the ball swerved back into play, those

not right on the spot were in ignorance as to what infringement had taken place, and the spectators were not slow to shout their disapproval of the ruling. Near the interval Luton's right wing threatened danger, and once Taylor nearly brought about the downfall of his own goal by passing back rather wildly to Kitchen, who was not prepared, but he just managed to smother the ball and prevent the point, and the teams crossed over with a blank score-sheet, a result rather flattering to the Hammers, for Luton's work certainly deserved at least a goal.

The first incident of note in the concluding half was a fine run down and centre from Porter, which Pearson dashed up and caught on his forehead, but the ball glanced off at a terrific pace just a yard or side wide of the upright. If Pearson had but met the ball at the proper angle nothing could have prevented a goal. It was decidedly the best attempt to score of the whole match, and would have given Luton considerable courage to go in and win. Naturally Jones was not so well able to hold Stapley because of his injury, and the local amateur was badly let in on one occasion, but he finished up with a weak shot, Platt saving easily. Platt had a more difficult shot from the same person a minute or so later, and only prevented a score by sending over the bar for a corner, which came to nothing.

Luton were scarcely having so much of the game, and Platt was kept busier than before. In saving an attempt from Stapley, Platt carried the ball over the proper limit, and a free kick was given against him not more than five yards out of goal. But Luton packed the goal-mouth, and the place-kick rebounded off one of the defenders, and danger was averted rather luckily. A long shot from almost the half-way line on the part of Taylor caused Platt to use his hands.

Following a spell of attacking on the part of West Ham, the ball was returned up the field, and Porter was discovered with it at his toe right in midfield. He raced down, and Kitchen observing there was nothing else to be done, came out of goal to tackle the amateur. It was an anxious moment, and Porter could have taken the ball much closer before he shot and thus have made a goal practically certain, but seeing Kitchen coming upon him, he let drive while about twenty yards out, and had the mortification of seeing the West Ham goalie just touch the ball for a corner. It was the easiest chance of the match, and Porter was rather upset about his failure at the finish.

It was anybody's game up to twenty minutes in the second half, for neither side had held the advantage to any great extent, and it was evident a goal would practically settle the result. As it happened, this fell to West Ham at this point. Shea being the real cause, for it was a fine dropping centre from him which led Platt to leave his charge to block Stapley, who was on the spot. Platt succeeded in preventing Stapley getting in his shot, and both fell a few yards out of goal, only to find Watson get to the ball before any other Lutonian could come to their comrade's assistance, and the inside-left easily scored what proved the only goal of the match.

Young put in a tremendous drive which Platt did well to stop at all, and McCurdy got the ball out of danger by giving a corner. Kitchen was several times right down the field when his side were pressing, but he always managed to get back to his place when Luton came his way. Moody, in making a dash through, was badly kicked by Hammond, and it was a minute or so before play was resumed, and then he changed places with Porter, but he was of little use, and Luton were practically left with four forwards. Shea put through following a corner kick, but was given offside, and the game ended without any addition to the score. Taking the play all through, Luton were extremely unlucky to lose, as was generally conceded after the match.

Platt, Hogg, and McCurdy set up a fine defence, and it is a fortunate thing that Hogg came through the match without mishap, as it would have given considerable trouble to provide four capable backs each week-end if he had broken down, seeing Watkins and Nicholson are both practically unsound together. It fell to R. Hawkes' lot as a rule to tackle Stapley, and it speaks well for his share of the work that the home centre did not get his usual goal. Jones did good work up to the time of his mishap, and showed great pluck in remaining on the field afterwards.

On the whole Luton's attack did well in midfield, but neither winger was so successful as their opponents in this position in getting their centres across. Pearson played a good game at centre, but was troubled towards the close with his knee once more, although it is to be hoped it is not serious. Porter was, of course, strange to his comrade's style, and this feeling undoubtedly brought about a little hesitancy at times as to what he should do. Still, he gave promise of becoming an acquisition when he has settled down, his pace coming in useful many times.