

The Southern League.

SOUTHAMPTON v. LUTON.

Played at Southampton on Saturday.

Result:—

Southampton 6 goals.

Luton nil.

The teams were as under:—

Southampton—Lock; Eastham and Robertson; Johnstone, Thorp, and Trueman; Bainbridge, Jefferies, Hughes, Shearer, and Blake.

Luton—Platt; Dimmock and McCurdy; F. Hawkes, Jones, and R. Hawkes; Brown, Stansfield, Menzies, Moody, and Johnson.

Referee, Mr. A. J. Barker (Hanley).

Not for many years now have Luton booked a victory at Southampton; therefore it can scarcely be looked upon as a surprise that they once more failed on Saturday. But the margin against them was much greater than expected, for as a rule only the odd goal separates the totals. The Saints had already secured the leading position in the Southern League previous to the match under notice, and now appear to have made that proud post their own for a time at least.

Luton had the assistance of Platt and Menzies for the first time this season, and both expressed themselves as thoroughly fit to stand the full ninety minutes. Other changes from the previous week were Dimmock in place of Gregory, and Stansfield for Haycock, while R. M. Hawkes resumed his usual position. On the whole, these alterations appeared to strengthen the side, on paper, at any rate, but undoubtedly in meeting Southampton they were pitted against the strongest team in the competition for the time being. Except for certain special matches, Southampton do not get the support one would expect, and their officials were rather pleased with the crowd, which numbered some 8,000. The cash taken was over £50 greater than on any previous occasion when Luton have figured at the Dell, and they have opened the season at Southampton more than once.

The home side were without their usual left wing, but in introducing Blake, a popular selection was made, for he is a great favourite with the crowd. Bob won the toss for the second time this season, but it did not give much advantage, the weather conditions being ideal. The first incident of note was a long return up the field from Robertson, and Dimmock miskicking, Jefferies promptly pounced on the ball and let drive in fine style, only to find Platt right on the spot.

The first corner of the game fell to the Saints. Shearer not being quite able to get the ball round Dimmock, kicked it on to the Luton right back. Luton raced away as a result of some left wing combination, and the ball was slung across to Brown, who promptly returned it to the centre of the field, only to find Johnson, who got the ball again, was off-side, and a really promising chance was spoilt thereby. Coming through again, Johnson beat Eastham for pace completely, and tried a long shot, which, however, was not properly directed, and resulted in a goal kick. It was now the turn of the Saints, and Bainbridge caused Platt to narrowly watch the ball as it travelled across the mouth of goal at a terrific rate, but it just missed the extreme upright and went for a goal kick once more. Jefferies next did his best to notch the opening point, but Platt was on the alert, and saved his shot in brilliant style.

Still, he was not able to maintain a clean sheet for any length. The game was not ten minutes old when Hughes forced his way clean through the centre and opened the score for his side with an unstoppable shot from close range. Nothing daunted, Luton went away on the re-start, and F. Hawkes gave Brown a fine pass when the latter was standing clear, and the ex-Brentford player promptly got away down the field and banged the ball across in fine style. Moody and Eastham both made a dash for it, and the latter just managed to arrive on the scene a second in advance of Moody, and cleared his lines when a goal promised to equalise matters. A breakaway by Jefferies and Bainbridge necessitated "Bob" tackling the former, and as he fell just outside the penalty area, the referee gave a free kick against the Luton captain. It was a most unfortunate decision for Luton, for Jefferies pounced on the place-kick, and with Platt's view interfered with, netted a second goal for his side with a fast grounder. This brought about a considerable amount of pressure on the Luton defence, the Saints' attack, flushed with success, literally swarming round Platt, and it was really more than Dimmock and McCurdy could do to keep them at bay.

Johnson was working well on the extreme left, and very nearly succeeded in reducing the margin when he banged the ball hard at Lock, who brought off a fine save amid great applause. An ugly incident occurred just at this stage, for in going for the ball Dimmock and Eastham came into collision, and down each player went like a log. However, after the customary attention from the trainers, both men quickly resumed their positions. Brown and Stansfield forced another corner, Robertson kicking over the line when hard pressed. This led up to a sustained attack on Lock's charge, but eventually Menzies headed by for a goal kick. Bainbridge raced through, leaving McCurdy altogether, but Dimmock came to the rescue and just managed to clear.

Twenty-five minutes from the start a further disaster shattered Luton's chances of winning considerably. Hughes got in a fine shot which Platt did wonderfully well to prevent scoring, but he could only turn the ball round the post, and from the corner kick, Hughes headed through, making three goals for Southampton. Menzies just afterwards, by an almost identical movement, forced Lock to give a corner in order to relieve, but Johnson put the flag-kick behind. Just before the interval, Moody tried a long-range effort, but Lock kept this out, as he did the return attempt, making a couple of good saves. About the last exciting incident before the teams crossed over was a terrific drive from Blake's toe, which Platt neatly tipped over the bar, although by the manner Peter looked he was not at all sure the ball had not found a resting-place in the net. Nothing more came along, and the teams retired for the usual breather with the score 3—0 in favour of the Saints.

At the commencement of the second half, the game underwent an entire change; in-

deed, for fully twenty minutes it appeared to be only a question as to how soon Luton would reduce the lead. The Luton front rank were now the attacking party, and Lock was pretty frequently called upon, but he proved unbeatable, aided as he was with the best of luck.

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Menzies initiated a clever movement, which led up to Brown driving a hard shot that missed by inches only. Again Johnson forced a corner by some resolute play, and R. Hawkes did his best to improve upon this incident, but fell over in the penalty area, and a penalty claim was set up, only to be negatived by the presiding official. Stansfield hereabouts took up his share in the general attack, and ran well forward before letting drive with a shot which appeared to be travelling just inside the extreme post, but Lock literally fell on the ball, and worked his way on his hands and knees away from the goal, bringing off a clever if somewhat lucky save. Another turn of bad luck for Luton was the referee stopping the game when Brown was right through after recovering himself from a bad foul, and awarding Luton a free kick, which was not required under the circumstances, for Brown was in a much better position for scoring than was possible when the Saints' defence had time to line up. Dimmock, who took the place-kick, put the ball yards wide.

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Johnson gained still another corner by worrying Eastham, and the outside-left taking the flag-kick. It was some time before the ball left the goal mouth, and then only at the expense of a second corner. This was again well placed, but Lock eventually punched the ball away, and Luton's chance of pulling the game out of the fire vanished when Blake bored his way right up to the goal line with a couple of Lutonians in immediate attendance, and the Saints' outside-left managed in a miraculous manner to squeeze the ball through the goal from what appeared an impossible angle.

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From this point, the game was once more in favour of the home side, and Hughes very soon netted a fifth after Platt had saved his first attempt. It was a very near thing, for Platt crashed into the home centre-forward before he could recover his balance after taking the kick, but it was just too late to prevent the shot being taken. The final goal of the match was the result of a penalty awarded for a charge on the part of Jones, and Thorp made no mistake with this.

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While awarding Southampton all the credit due to them, it is only fair to Luton to state they were out of luck on many occasions. Still, on Saturday's form, the Saints will go very close to the championship. The only player who did not show to advantage was Shearer, at inside-left, who seemed a bit overweighted. Lock is now a great goalkeeper, while Jefferies is looked upon down Southampton way as a coming International.

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Luton, as mentioned above, were not seen to great advantage except for about twenty minutes in the second half, but still one or two players can look back on the match without blaming themselves for the heavy defeat. One of these is Platt, and it is pleasant to find he gives no trace of his recent illness. McCurdy was the better back of the two, while F. Hawkes was in much better form than his two previous games. Indeed, he was easily the best player in the half-back line. The forward line were uneven, doing well at times but failing to keep it up, and they fell away badly at the finish as a combination. Johnson was far and away the most effective, and fully played up to his reputation. Brown did some pretty work at times, while Menzies played the methodical game, and will do better when he gets more used to his comrades' play.