

SOUTHERN LEAGUE.

Defeat at Southampton

CHANGING THE TEAM.

WHICH IS LUTON'S BEST SIDE?

BOB HAWKES' PLUCK.

Luton's task at Southampton was generally looked upon as an hopeless one, judging by the comments in the London press, but no one was quite prepared for the overwhelming defeat represented by six clear goals. In all probability the "Saints" will provide the champions of the league for the seventh time in history, so that coming from such a source the disgrace is not quite so bad as say a five nil defeat which Leyton inflicted last season. Still it is quite bad enough and a early repitition would spell financial disaster.

On paper the team was at full strength, for Stansfield was selected in preference to Haycock, while Platt and Menzies were looked upon as the first choice for their respective positions. R. M. Hawkes, true to his promise before he left for Sweden, once more at great inconvenience came to the help of his club.

Unfortunately, the elements were unkind on the return journey from Gothenburg and his boat which was timed to reach Grimsby at ten o'clock on Thursday night did not get into port until four o'clock on Friday afternoon, a matter of eighteen hours behind time.

This meant that "Bob" did not arrive at Luton before one o'clock on Saturday morning. He could not get away with the other members of the team, indeed, when they left Luton by the 9.39 train it was not quite certain that he would be able to join the side, but, coming by a later train he just caught them up at Waterloo.

Eleven professional players were taken in case the captain should not be able to catch them up and it was left until the arrival at Southampton as to whether Menzies or Bradley should act as the pivot of the attack. Menzies was not to turn out unless he felt fully convinced he could do himself justice, and as he expressed himself able to do this he was included in the side.

The Luton captain certainly looked none the worse for his long journey, as a matter of fact he had been practically travelling since early Wednesday morning up to an hour and a half before the match, but it was soon apparent he had miscalculated the amount of energy he possessed, and he palpably tired after the first quarter of hour's play. Not many players would have turned out under such an handicap but he felt bound to carry out his promise if at all possible, and the club are to be congratulated upon possessing such a whole hearted player.

The teams and officials turned out as under:

Southampton:—Lock; Eastham, Robertson; Johnson, Thorpe, Trueman; Bainbridge, Jeffries, Hughes, Shearer and Blake.

LUTON: Platt, Dismock, McCurdy, F. Hawkes, Jones, R. M. Hawkes; Brown, Stansfield, Menzies, Moody and Johnson.

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

There was quite a respectable gate for Southampton, who do not get the support one would expect, the crowd numbering close on eight thousand, but the weather was almost ideal for football. "Bob" won the toss, as against Norwich City so that in this respect he is more fortunate than last season when for weeks the opposite was the case. Still there is really little advantage on such a pitch as the Dell for being thirty feet below the level of the street it is the most sheltered ground in the league.

The home forwards were the first to make headway, Hughes heading the ball into the goal mouth almost immediately after the start but Platt cleverly caught and threw away. Luton with some neat combination worked the ball to the opposite end, Johnson getting the ball from Brown's centre, only to be pulled up for offside. A long return from Eastham set Blake going and a pass to Shearer provided the latter with a good opening but he quite failed to control the ball.

Luton's right wing got away but were pulled up by Trueman and later Johnson shot outside instead of centring, a feat Bainbridge copied at the opposite end and a moment later. Jeffries made better shooting practice upon getting a pass from his partner, but Platt easily saved.

Still the opening goal was not long in coming for ten minutes after the start Jeffries tricked Jones and slipped the ball through to Hughes, who ran close in and scored with a fine shot.

Luton attacked on the restart and Johnson wound up a fine run by shooting into Lock's hands.

Eastham cleared a second attack after which the Saints swarmed round the Luton goal. Jeffries was coming through when tackled by R. Hawkes just outside the penalty area and greatly to Bob's dismay, the referee awarded the home players a free kick.

This was taken by Johnson, who gave to Jeffries and the latter netted with a ground shot which Platt apparently never saw for he made no attempt to stop it, several players being in his line of sight.

With the two goal lead the Saints were most aggressive, and Platt was kept busy, but he kept out several teasers in masterly style. During a hot attack, Dimmock and Hughes met and both kicking at the ball at the same moment their boots caught each other and both fell, apparently seriously injured. The game was stopped and both trainers were called upon the field but after some attention each player was able to resume their places.

One of the many right wing attacks set up by Bainbridge and his partner led to Hughes testing Platt with a low drive which he did well to stop, even at the expense of a corner.

But this did not prevent the third goal coming, for Hughes headed the ball through as a result of the flag kick. Only twenty-five minutes had elapsed and the outlook was very gloomy for Luton so much had the home players taken possession of the game. Blake all but did the trick for the fourth time with a lovely shot which Platt just managed to tip over the bar and this time nothing came of the corner kick. Luton's defence, however, withstood the severe strain from this point until the interval.

Luton started the second half like a different team and for twenty minutes appeared likely to make a good fight of it even if they did not draw level. Anyway, the home defence experienced considerable difficulty in keeping their lines intact, and if Lock had not been extremely vigilant one ball miskicked by Eastham would have been the means of reducing the margin by one goal at least.

Robertson came in for some hearty applause by dashing into Luton's left wing and clearing with a huge kick down the field a minute or so later. Stansfield made an individual dash through and shot the ball hard at Lock, who fell, but somehow managed to roll over with the ball away from the danger zone and ultimately threw it away after dodging Moody right on the line just a yard or so wide of the goal. The crowd were roused to great enthusiasm by this relief for a goal appeared a "cert."

If a goal could have been scored for Luton at this stage it would undoubtedly have had an enormous influence on the final result. But unfortunately the next point fell to the Saints, and this quite settled matters. Hughes darted between Dimmock and McCurdy, and was fouled just outside the penalty area. From the place kick the ball went out to Blake, who although closely attended by both Jones and Dimmock, managed to get the ball close to the line midway between the corner flag and the goal and screwed it into goal from what appeared an impossible angle.

It was now only a question as to how many more goals would be put to the credit of Southampton. It was therefore no surprise when some fine work from Bainbridge and Jeffries culminated in the ball coming to Hughes, who let drive at goal, but Platt met his shot and saved but could not get it far away and dashing out to prevent Hughes getting in a return arrived just the fraction of a second too late.

Hughes and Platt both fell as a result of the collision but the former had just got his foot to the ball and placed it through an open goal, making number five.

The final goal was a result of a penalty caused through Jones fouling Jeffries just inside the area and Thorpe made no mistake with it.

Undoubtedly Southampton fully deserved the victory although scarcely by this pronounced margin. But it was one of those days when the luck of the game appeared to go one way the whole time. Still unless they experience a very bad patch they seem likely to go through the season with great honours.

About the only weak spot on Saturday was Shearer, and he was only playing as a temporary experiment caused through injury to the regular player. Lock was brilliant during the time Luton really attacked for any sustained period, while Jeffries is voted the best inside right in the country at the present time by local supporters. Possibly he was lucky to catch R. Hawkes under the conditions of last Saturday.

For Luton the two most successful players were Platt, and Johnson, for notwithstanding the heaving score the Luton goalkeeper played fully up to his reputation on this, his first appearance, and in his case there was nothing perceptible of his recent illness. Johnson was certainly the most effective forward on his side and was a continual source of trouble to Eastham. Dimmock and McCurdy were greatly overworked and the form-

er could not quite manage to hold Blake on occasions.

F. Hawkes probably did the best work among the middle division, although his two comrades worked their hardest to prevent the home attack swarming into goal. Menzies at times gave evidence of his known ability, but of course, has not yet got used to his comrades and it will be only by playing together a few times full advantage can come of his pretty touches. Stansfield did not do at all badly and should make Brown a good partner when they fully get used to one another. Result:—

Southampton: 6 goals.

LUTON: Nil.