

The Southern League.

WEST HAM v. LUTON.

Played at West Ham on Saturday. Result:

West Ham 4 goals.

Luton nil.

The teams were as under:—

West Ham—Kitchen; Taylor and Harwood; Yenson, Piercey, and Tirrell; Ashton, Shea, Foster, Burton, and Blackburn.

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

Referee, Mr. A. T. Randles (Coventry).

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Although the Luton front rank had undergone still another shuffle, it was the strongest available, for neither Bradley nor Johnson could have played under any circumstances, and, as a matter of fact, Menzies and Brown were none too fit. Endeavours were made to enlist the services of Porter, but he had already arranged to turn out for the Calica. In the defence the only change from the previous Wednesday was McCurdy for Gregory, and this was looked upon as strengthening the team, although Mac's knee troubled him somewhat.

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Only one Southern League victory stood to the credit of West Ham previous to Saturday, that being gained over the champions in the first match of the season. Harwood, who had been looked upon as a reserve back, played such a fine game in the mid-week Western League game, that he was put into the side at left back, and Taylor crossed over to the opposite wing. But it is the forwards who have caused the chief trouble at Boleyn Castle, as in other places, and the whole line underwent revision, with happy results as it turned out.

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During the opening stages the game gave little promise of the fierce onslaught the Luton goal was called upon to encounter a bit later on, for neither side settled down to a sustained attack for quite a quarter of an hour. It is true some shots were sent in, and one from Moody just missed the crossbar and landed on top of the net during this period. West Ham had the advantage of a couple of corner kicks, and a minute later hands were given against McCurdy practically on the eighteen-yards' line. This was taken twice, but neither time did Platt have any anxiety, for the place kick was easily cleared.

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Most danger came from Luton's new left wing, and with Taylor very erratic in his kicking, the crowd were more than once rather anxious to see the ball placed out of harm's way. At the opposite end of the field Platt, in his turn, gave the Lutonians present the shivers when he all but missed punching a corner kick, but fortunately the ball dropped out of danger and was ultimately cleared.

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But the opening goal was not long in coming, and it fell to West Ham—partly through a misunderstanding, it is true. There was a scrimmage in the goal-mouth following an attack set up by Shea, and Platt decided to come out with the evident intention of catching the ball. He would have easily cleared, there is no doubt, but Dimmock was not aware of his comrade's move, and got in a rather good kick under difficulties, which nine times out of ten would have saved the situation. As it happened, Foster, ever on the alert for a chance shot, met the ball, and drove it back into goal high up, Platt not having time to recover from his dash out a moment before.

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This success invigorated the Hammers considerably, and they simply swarmed to the attack. For the next ten minutes or so Dimmock and McCurdy were very hard pressed indeed. Luton could not get the ball away, and Blackburn gave Piercey a back pass when the home centre-half was standing unattended some thirty yards out. Just as everyone was watching for the last-mentioned player to put the ball to one of his forwards, he let drive all along the ground and scored No. 2, Platt making an ineffectual plunge to prevent the ball entering the net.

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Within less than two minutes Luton were still another goal down, Ashton snapping up a quick pass from Shea and scoring with a cross shot which Platt was certainly not prepared for, as Ashton was in a very awkward position for scoring, and Luton's goalkeeper would be expecting him to centre the ball. During the fateful twelve minutes which resulted in these three goals there was only one team in it, but at no other period of the game could Luton be said to be overplayed.

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Bob Hawkes, quite undismayed by the big deficit, plyed his forwards with several grand passes, but the finishing work was very poor, and it was really a succession of goal kicks by Kitchen that the crowd were entertained with for a minute or so. Once or twice Moody and Stansfield promised to alter this state of affairs, but they could not get one by Kitchen, and Menzies, rather slow in taking their centres, was somewhat easily knocked off the ball when he appeared likely to get through. Still, nothing more was done by West Ham in the way of increasing their lead up to half-time.

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Luton commenced the second half as if they intended reducing the lead at least, but their efforts all seemed to fizzle out at the critical moment, and their shooting was far below the Hammers' standard during their period of pressure. Taylor and Harwood were kept fairly busy, but Kitchen had a comparatively easy time. During the last half-hour West Ham were without Tirrell, who met with an injury, and the trainer took him off the field, but even then Luton were unable to pierce the defence, although they kept up an attack of a sort.

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A breakaway by Ashton, however, resulted in still another goal for West Ham. The ball was crossed from the right to the opposite wing, and promptly returned into goal. Foster, in my opinion, was well offside when he received the ball, but the referee did not pull him up, and he easily beat Platt, who was evidently disgusted at the goal being allowed to count. This was all the scoring, and did not represent the run of the game, Luton deserving at least the one goal of the second half instead of its being credited to their opponents.

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Platt had little chance with either goal.

unless it was the shot from Piercey, as this came from long range. Without being in quite the brilliant form he was on Wednesday, Dimmock played a fine game. McCurdy seemed at times to feel the effects of his recent injury, and one bad shaking-up during the game did not tend to improve matters. Still, he played his usual steady game. The middle division played their part without anyone having cause to complain. But the forwards, as the score indicates, were not able to force matters to the extent desirable. The left wing were decidedly the better pair, and Stansfield played his best game for Luton. Menzies is not yet quick enough in getting away, although he played better than in his previous games, and with an improvement in physical condition, will yet earn a place in the front string. Brown was evidently troubled by his recent injury, but did better in the second half than the first, notwithstanding. Haycock worked hard, but did not get many chances to shine.

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West Ham were the smarter team, but the score flattered them. Still, they will probably gave the forward line as constituted on Saturday an extended trial, although the right wing pair are rather light. Harwood was the better back, and Piercey was a tower of strength at centre-half. Kitchen had far too little to do, considering the share Luton had of the midfield exchanges.

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The win gave immense satisfaction to the local crowd after the repeated failures; indeed, the local programme editor was so delighted with a mid-week Western League win by the odd goal, on the Monday previous, that he printed the result in big type no fewer than seven times. By the way, the notes concerning the Luton players in the same sheet caused not a little amusement, Moody being described as a local, "discovered last season," while Platt seems to have earned a reputation in London as a veteran, for he was referred to as a "good old stalwart."