

NORWICH CITY v. LUTON.

Played at Norwich on Monday. Result:—

Norwich City 3 goals.

Luton 2 goals.

Teams:—

Norwich City—Roney; Craig and Reynolds; Newlands, French, and Whiteman; Coxhead, C. E. Dunning, Tomlinson, Flanagan, and Allsopp.

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

Referee Mr. J. T. Howeroft (Bolton).

Luton were fortunate in one respect, inasmuch as what is now considered their strongest combination were able to turn out at Norwich for the final match of the Christmas holidays. Unfortunately, Brown came over very queer on the journey, and in London it was feared he would not be able to complete the tiring journey, but after a visit to the chemist he seemed much better, and went forward with his comrades.

It was a very different Norwich team from that which opened the season at Luton that turned out at the "Nest," and the majority were strangers to Luton. The demerits of the peculiar ground now owned by Norwich have been fully trumpeted through their inability to play their F.A. Cup-tie at home, and I can quite understand that it would present a curious appearance a week or so back when pitches were on the soft side. But on Monday the ground more resembled a gravelled path on one side, sand and stones having been rolled in earlier in the day. The pitch had a slight covering of snow, was frost-bound, and would have been decidedly dangerous if it had not been perfectly level on the surface. The spectators are packed into certain portions of the ground, while at others the players have only tremendously high sand banks near them, and altogether the surroundings assume such a very strange aspect that it must take any team some time to get used to the peculiarities.

There was a very fair crowd present when Tomlinson kicked off, McCurdy having won the toss. After the first run down on the part of Coxhead, the ball was banged well up from the goal kick, and Stansfield managed to slip by Reynolds, but Craig came across to intercept the centre, only to turn the ball out for a corner kick. This was well placed, and F. Hawkes headed well into the goal-mouth, but Craig this time got the ball away in better style, and it was at once taken right up to Luton's goal, Allsopp sending across one of his best efforts, which came to Dunning, who was well placed for scoring, but he missed his chance—a lucky escape for Luton, especially from the principal Norwich sharpshooter.

The ball on such a short pitch was much oftener in front of one goal or the other than is usually the case, and this explains the comparatively heavy scoring in some recent matches there. At Roney's end a flying centre from Stansfield nearly did the trick, but the Canaries' goalie just managed to catch the ball and throw it to one of his backs to kick away. A sudden dash through on the City's left wing found Tomlinson with the ball just in front of Platt, and he side-tapped it through twelve minutes from the start. Luton appealed strongly for offside, and there certainly looked some grounds for this, but Mr. Howeroft promptly pointed to the centre, and these who know his manner will agree it was useless to appeal.

On the run of the game this lead was not deserved, for the Luton front string had been playing the better football; indeed, right through the first half they more than held their own in this respect. Another burst through by Flanagan ended in the ball being banged through again, but this time the referee agreed with the Luton view and awarded offside. Moody forced a corner kick, and following this, considerable pressure was put upon Roney and his backs, but once more the situation was relieved through Menzies getting offside. At this stage both teams were sinners in this respect, and free kicks were a pronounced feature of the game.

Moody made a fine individual effort to equalise matters, but Roney, dashing out of goal, just got on the spot before Moody could apply the final touch. Norwich were practically presented with their second goal, McCurdy, in trying to get the ball down the field, miskicking badly, and the ball came straight to Dunning, standing quite unmarked. It was a grand pass such as any inside forward likes to get from his outside man, and naturally Dunning placed the ball through, making goal No. 2, and the game not a quarter of an hour old.

But it was only for a minute that this lead was held, for a fine centre from Brown led up to French giving a corner kick about a yard from the upright during severe pressure, Roney being out of goal at the moment. Stansfield placed this right into the mouth of goal, and Moody headed through over the heads of several Norwich players, almost falling over them into the net himself. Having broken the ice, Luton promised to do even better, and time after time clever work brought danger to Norwich, but Roney and Co. seemed quite content to defend by giving corners, and they took good care Moody did not get in another one. Brown was badly busted by Reynolds and the game was stopped for a minute or two, but Norman never left the field.

Platt brought off a couple of good saves, and on the second occasion he took the ball well down the field himself, giving it to Stansfield well out on the wing, who ran through and centred to Menzies, the latter's shot almost shaving the bar as it flew over. It was a clever movement altogether, and fully deserved to equalise, and it would have been no cause for complaint from a Norwich point of view if matters were equal at the interval, but it was not to be, and the Canaries were still leading by the odd goal when the players retired at half-time.

It appears the Canaries were now kicking into the goal which has given them five goals in the second half at the two previous matches, and the crowd urged them to repeat this against Luton. The game had scarcely been re-started when Dunning netted again, driving the ball home during a melee in front of Platt. It was apparent Luton would be hard pressed to keep down the score, and practically the whole Norwich team were having a pop at goal, shots coming in at any and every opportunity. Whiteman especially put in several really fine drives, but either the direction was a bit too elevated or Platt was on the spot, and nothing more was done for Norwich in the way of scoring. Platt used grand judgment on more than one occasion, but he was almost beaten with a terrific ground drive from Allsopp, but, throwing himself full length, he just turned the ball round the upright, hurting his knee in falling, but he was soon at it again, and saved twice in quick succession from the Canaries' right wing.

Luton hereabouts went in for their final spurt, and during the closing quarter of an hour were always dangerous. Ten minutes from the close Moody worked himself into a scoring position and reduced the lead once more to the smallest dimensions. Seeing there was even yet a chance to snatch a point, Luton played their hardest, and the crowd were kept on tenter-hooks right up to the finish. F. Hawkes got in one grand attempt which beat Roney all the way, but the ball just touched Craig's shoulder sufficiently to turn it past the upright instead of entering the net. Right on time Brown, who seemed in the second half to have fully recovered from his indisposition, sent in a beautiful drive from the wing which Roney could not reach, but it was the

merest trifle wide, and went out on the opposite side.

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Except for the first half-hour in the second half, Luton were always the cleverer side, and certainly would not have been judged at all lucky if they had divided the points. Platt, as already mentioned, did finely under extreme pressure, while Gregory has not played better since he came to Luton, and was the best back on the field. Stansfield and Moody were the better wing, but Brown did finely after the interval, and Craig could not hold him at all for quite sustained periods. Reynolds, who has just been secured by Norwich, is a rough diamond, and with more experience should be a worthy successor to our old friend Mac, whose style he reminds one of, and is known locally as the indiarubber man.