

The Southern League.

LEYTON v. LUTON.

Played at Leyton on Saturday. Result:—

Leyton	2 goals.
Luton	nil.

The teams were as under:—

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

Leyton—Whitbourne; Meredith and Longworth; Buchanan, Cresser, and Gray; Nicholls, Seeburg, Renneville, Ryder, and Mayo.

Referee, Mr. R. P. Dommett (Portsmouth).

At the commencement of the season Leyton were doing badly, but recently they have improved, and therefore Luton's task of attempting to break their wretched away record was not so rosy as the position of the two clubs on the League table appeared to indicate. It will be remembered that Leyton piled on the agony last season, inflicting the heaviest defeat Luton sustained either home or away, but there was little fear of such a result this time. The side which opposed Luton on Saturday was practically a new one from the team which visited Luton early in the season. As both the Luton captain and vice-captain were unable to make the journey, F. Hawkes acted as skipper for the second time in the Southern League. The previous occasion was the visit to Reading, when a point was gained, and Fred had hopes of doing even better this journey—before the match, of course.

Menzies kicked off, and the Luton left wing went down the field straightaway, but Meredith nipped in with fine judgment just as Stansfield was about to middle the ball, or Luton would probably have been a goal up in the first minute. Danger to Leyton next came as a result of a clever pass from Haycock to Brown, who raced down in fine style, and, without stopping to steady the ball, dropped it in front of goal at Moody's feet, but unfortunately Moody could not control the lively ball and the chance was missed.

Luton were by far the smartest set of players, and but for the stadiness of Meredith would have taken a substantial lead quite early in the game. Menzies made several fine openings, but they were not followed up, and the passing game was rather overdone. After beating at least three players, the Luton centre put the ball through for Haycock to have a pop at goal, but unfortunately the referee pulled Haycock up for offside just as he was about to shoot. Possibly it was a correct ruling, but it must have been a near thing, and the movement quite deserved a better fate, for the home defence were thoroughly nonplussed by Menzies' trickiness, and it was very lucky for them Haycock was judged offside.

Not often at this stage was Platt troubled, but he brought off one good save from a long shot which came from one of the home half-backs at a good pace. This, however, was the only shot he had to deal with for several minutes, while at the opposite end of the field Whitbourne was kept on the alert, although it must be recorded that he was not overworked considering the pressure, few dangerous attempts coming to hand.

Brown, with another fine run, planted the ball right across the goal-mouth, and Moody shot in, only to have the ball returned by a clever kick out by Longworth, but Jones meeting the return, let drive with a hot attempt which would probably have knocked the goal-keeper over if it had been a bit lower, but unfortunately the ball just shaved the bar and went for a goal kick. Another breakaway by Leyton's right wing promised to open the score, for the Luton defenders were a bit down the field when the movement commenced, but Gregory, dashing up, got in the way of Nicholls' final drive, the ball striking him on the shoulder.

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It was a question whether the incident happened inside or outside the penalty area, but it certainly was not a penalty. To the consternation of the Luton players, the referee signalled for a penalty kick. He was quickly surrounded, Platt and Jones being very prominent in the subsequent argument, and finally he was induced to consult the linesman nearest to the spot. Platt picked up the ball to throw it to the spot where Gregory stood, but the referee again pointed for the penalty kick, and further protest on the part of Luton was only prevented by the linesman rushing on to the field and having another word with the referee. Then apparently he convinced the whistle-holder that the Luton version was correct, and the ball was thrown up half-way between the touch-line and the side penalty line. Altogether at least three minutes was spent over this incident, and the home spectators showed their displeasure at the final ruling in the usual way.

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A minute later the referee evoked the jeers of the crowd by giving Nicholls offside when he had three Lutonians between him and the goal, but the decision was really correct, for Nicholls had come from an offside position to get the ball, and it was one of the smartest rulings of the afternoon, for, if the truth be told, Mr. Dommett was very much at sea with more than one offside decision. The first corner of the match fell to Leyton, and this after a full half-hour's play, but nothing came of it. Moody hereabouts got in one of his headers, and Whitbourne did well to get it away, especially as Menzies literally threw himself at the ball as it left Whitbourne's hands, only just missing it, and finding himself lying full length across the goal-mouth.

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Leyton had gradually improved after the first half-hour, and were having an equal share of the game towards the close of the first half, Platt bringing off a fine save by tipping a good attempt by Ryder over the bar for a corner. At the opposite end of the field Moody had a good chance when practically clear, but shot rather tamely direct to Whitbourne. As a result of this effort, apparently, Moody broke down, and almost immediately after left the field. The Leyton forwards coming down the field in a line, brought the ball well into the Luton quarters, and Platt was called upon to get it away quickly, which he did, but Renneville could not stop himself, and ran right into Peter's foot, hurting himself rather badly, and he also retired, leaving each side with ten men for the final minutes before half-time. Neither side could claim to be playing good football at this stage, the only incident calling for special comment being a clever run by the Luton right wing pair, and Stansfield meeting the ball, headed in, Whitbourne bringing off a fine save.

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When the team returned after the interval it was observed that both the injured players were out again, but Moody was quite useless, and after a spell of outside-left, finally left the field for good. Renneville changed places with Seeburg, and this appeared to make for an improvement, for the home forwards were in much better form the whole of the second half. Nicholls made a fine run on the right, and Dimmock conceded a corner when hard pressed by the centre, while a minute later the ball was actually placed through the Luton goal by Ryder as a result of another of Nicholls' lightning touch-line rushes. But before he got his centre across Nicholls had taken the ball a foot or so over the line, and the linesman called the referee's attention to this, with the result that the goal did not count.

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But it was not to be expected that the amount of pressure Leyton were putting on the Luton defence could remain without reward, and when the second half was some fifteen minutes old, Mayo placing the ball to Seeburg, the latter cleverly slipped it through to Renneville, who had only Platt to beat, the backs being wide for the moment, and with a cross shot the Leytonian opened the score, the ball striking the upright and glancing through.

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Luton never looked likely winners after this, although of course while the score stood with only a single goal on the sheet, there was always a possibility of a chance breakaway

equalising matters. One such opportunity at least fell to Luton when Menzies, with splendid judgment, placed the ball well forward on the right wing, and Brown, standing just inside his own half, had a clear run from what otherwise would have been an offside position, but he kicked the ball a trifle too hard when he reached the pass, and Meredith just managed to get over and clear before Brown could get control a second time. It was just after this that Moody left the field for good, and with only four forwards Luton's attack became largely individual; indeed, the players were continually out of position. Several corners fell to Leyton, but none was turned to account, and they had at least two place kicks within a yard of the penalty area without tangible result. But ten minutes before the finish a corner was awarded which led up to Leyton's second and final goal. The actual flag kick was cleared, but the ball went out to Ryder, who was standing well back, and he drove it back and scored with an unstoppable shot.

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Curiously, Luton did more pressing after this, but Whitbourne was equal to all emergencies, although Brown gave him one teaser which he did well to safely dispose of, while a corner forced by Stansfield was headed in finely by Jones, only to find Buchanan on the spot, and he managed to clear. Again Stansfield made an individual run through, but could not shake off the attention of Meredith, and Cresser finally relieved the danger with a big clearance down the field. Just before the finish Mayo had an open goal following hands given against Menzies, but the Leyton winger put yards over from close range, and the final whistle went with Leyton deservedly winners.

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Luton went all to pieces after the first half-an-hour as a result of Moody's breakdown, for although the London critics do not mention it, Luton were practically playing ten men for over an hour. Even when Moody returned for a short time, he simply stood on the touch-line and could not even lift his leg when the ball did come his way, much less run. This meant that Stansfield could not pass out at all, and for all practical purposes Luton were minus a left wing. As a consequence the right wing received no passes from the opposite side of the field, and Brown standing idle on the wing, the whole front string were upset, and finally Brown came into the middle of the field and made one or two individual runs, but as this left Luton with no one on either touch-line it was doubtful tactics, for Leyton had a clear run up every time the ball came out of the centre of the field.

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Gregory did a lot of work, but with the pressure put on during the second half he made a few mistakes; still on the whole he was the better back, Dimmock not being comfortable when hard pressed, although he kicked well when the ball came clear. The half-back line were overworked through the weakness of the forwards, but they each tried their hardest, and the fact that only two goals were netted speaks well for their ability, for, as explained above, Luton practically played on the defensive in the second half.

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