

The Southern League.

LUTON v. WEST HAM.

Played at Luton on Saturday. Result:—

Luton 1 goal.

West Ham nil.

The teams were as follow:—

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

West Ham—Kitchen; Shreeve and Taylor; Yenson, Chalkley, and Tirrell; Frost, Shea, Miller, Waggott, and Blackburn.

Referee, Mr. F. Heath (Birmingham).

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Luton have not experienced much good fortune in their League matches away from home, but they certainly have enjoyed a fair amount of luck on their own ground. They scarcely deserved to beat Southampton when the latter visited Luton early in the month, and again on Saturday they could hardly have complained if West Ham had at least shared the points.

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The game in the first half was a very moderate one. The ground was hard and lumpy, and the ball was lively—a good deal livelier than the players—and the play was of the kind that we usually associate with the Western League mid-week fixtures. The second half furnished plenty of excitement, however, Luton at first putting on the pressure and the visitors then taking up the challenge in great style.

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For nearly half-an-hour West Ham made desperate efforts to get on level terms, and time after time they forced the ball into the very mouth of goal, but what with Platt's splendid custodianship, Luton's fine defence, in which Gregory was ably supported by the halves, and the inability of the visiting forwards to do the right thing at the right moment, all the onslaughts came to naught. Then, in the last ten or fifteen minutes, the Luton forwards found their feet, and three times the ball was shot against the bar, so that the supporters went home feeling more satisfied with the victory than might otherwise have been the case.

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These supporters, by the way, were very few in number. The reaction following on the Cup-tie fever doubtless had something to do with the poor attendance, but probably the losses at Leyton and Tunbridge Wells also had an effect, the consequence being that not more than three thousand persons were present, despite a later kick-off and a bright afternoon.

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Bob as usual lost the toss, and Luton had to defend the town end. The home team made an incursion to begin with, but the visitors replied and soon had the Luton defence in difficulties, the result being a couple of fruitless corners. Luton resuming the aggressive, Johnson put the ball nicely across, giving Brown a very fair opening, but the outside-right found the bandages round his knees interfere with his speed, and he arrived too late.

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A decent shot by Haycock was saved by Kitchen, and Platt did ditto to a similar effort by Frost. West Ham followed with another attack, and Gregory and Chapman getting a bit mixed in tackling the left wing, left Shea with the ball and an open goal. It seemed any odds on the visitors taking the lead, but Shea's shot was altogether lacking in power, and as it went straight to Platt, a clearance was easily effected.

End-to-end play, of a rather uninteresting description, followed, and then Brown got away on the Luton right wing, but seemed likely to lose his opportunity of doing any good. Fortunately, however, he got his centre across, and the ball finding its way to Menzies, the latter made his opening and scored with a splendid shot, giving Kitchen no chance at all.

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This proved to be the only goal of the first half, though Johnson certainly ought to have scored from a centre by Haycock. He got the ball right in front and was allowed two attempts, but he could only manage a tame kick, and Kitchen had no difficulty in saving. The rest of the play before the interval calls for no comment, and if Luton deserved their lead when they crossed over, it was just about as much.

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In the first few minutes of the second half it looked as though the home team really meant business. Brown had discarded his bandages, and recovering his speed, he and Haycock threatened to do some execution. They ran through the defence repeatedly, but West Ham always managed to clear in the end. Once Kitchen had a good one from Haycock to dispose of, and he also had to punch out shots from Jones and Gregory.

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Then the visitors began to show a lot more energy, and Platt was once very lucky in running out and saving from the right wing. It looked a goal any way, whether he remained at home or ran out, but fortunately for Luton the ball was kicked straight to him and he was thus able to relieve an alarming situation.

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The visitors came again, and Platt saved at close quarters from Shea. In the rush which took place, the Luton custodian had his leg so badly hurt as to cause his temporary retirement, Johnson taking his place in goal, but as it happened there was little to do until Platt resumed his position.

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After that, however, the Luton defence had a very warm time, and Platt saved grandly from Miller close in. He could not get the ball away, and Waggott had a fine chance, but shot just by the post. Platt made another smart clearance from a centre by Frost, but the visitors continued to force the game, and from a well-placed corner Waggott headed close by.

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In a further attack the ball was worked to within a yard or two of goal, with three of the forwards well on the spot, but try as they would they could not get through, and a hearty cheer went up when it was seen that the defence had prevailed.

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This sort of thing occurred more than once, but eventually Brown transferred operations and finished up with a shot that just skimmed the bar. A regular pile-driver from the same player Kitchen managed to divert over the bar, and from the ensuing corner kick a warm scrimmage ensued, but ultimately the defenders succeeded in getting the ball away.

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Luton had all the better of the remaining play, except for two or three corners conceded to the visitors, and Stansfield, Brown, Johnson, Bob Hawkes, and others put in some very dangerous shots, the bar, as already stated, being struck three times by shots from the three first-named players, but no further score resulted, and Luton therefore won by a goal to nil.

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The play in the second half was well worth watching, but on the whole it can scarcely be said that Luton really did themselves justice, the forwards being a good deal below their best form. Possibly the ground and the difficulty in controlling the ball had something to do with it. The halves played finely, with Jones perhaps the most conspicuous, and at back Gregory did splendid work. Chapman was apparently hurt early in the game, for he limped considerably, and this no doubt prevented his doing himself full justice.

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As to the visitors, Kitchen was as clever as usual in goal, though it was only at the beginning and end of the second half that he was provided with much work. The backs played a sound game, but it was only in the second "forty-five" that the halves and forwards did

any credit to their reputation. Then they went all out, and, as previously explained, with a little luck they might have secured a different verdict.