

The Southern League.

MILLWALL v. LUTON.

Played at Millwall on Saturday. Result:—

Luton	2 goals.
Millwall	2 goals.

The teams were as below:—

Luton—Jarvis; Chapman and McCurdy; F. Hawkes, Jones, and R. Hawkes; Brown, Quinn, Smith, Moody, and Stansfield.

Millwall—Joyce; Stevenson and Jeffrey; Garrett, Wilson, and Blythe; Stirling, Martin, Twigg, Brearley, and Semple.

Referee, Mr. J. Iliffe (Worksop).

The return of R. Hawkes and Jarvis was looked upon with satisfaction, and notwithstanding Millwall's recent improvement, it was felt Luton would make a hard fight for honours. Although McCurdy had signed on during the previous week, it was not the intention of the directors to include him in either team on Saturday, as it was thought better to give him a proper chance to get into condition after his long rest. Unfortunately, on Friday morning Hedley fell out of the ranks as a result of a trial canter. He had been doing light training since his injury against Croydon, but right up to Friday morning was expected to play. In attempting to kick the ball, however, he badly wrenched his ankle once more, and his inclusion was altogether out of the question. Therefore McCurdy came into the team, it being considered his experience would stand in good stead, notwithstanding his lack of training. Millwall, on the principle of letting well alone, turned out the identical team that won at Park Royal the previous week, and the London papers, without exception, tipped them for easy winners.

The day was a wretched one anywhere, but the outlook on the Isle of Dogs was truly depressing, and it was no surprise to find the banks almost deserted when the game commenced. At no time could there have been more than 3,000 spectators present. But gates of these dimensions will soon be a thing of the past in the opinion of the Millwall officials, for they are quite jubilant over the fact that they have at last secured an ideal spot for a new pitch, and the plans were inspected with much satisfaction by the members of their board of directors just before the game started. All the arrangements were graphically described to a small crowd of Pressmen and the Luton officials by Mr. Skeggs, who had been to Town to conclude the preliminary arrangements with the London and Brighton Railway Company, who will be the new landlords, although the Millwall Club have to lay the ground out.

The ground appeared to be in rather a bad state, and it took both teams a little time to settle down, the ball being soon very difficult to judge on account of its greasy surface, and mis-kicks were of common occurrence. Jarvis was first called up, and he did well to stop a hard drive from Stirling, but Luton were quickly at the opposite end of the field, and forced the first corner of the match. Quinn and Smith each tried a shot, and the latter's drive had the misfortune to hit Stevenson and rebound out of danger. A few minutes later Smith got right through, and Joyce, with splendid judgment, dashed out and just got to the ball a yard in front of Smith, or a goal must have been the result, for there was no one else within half-a-dozen yards.

Luton were quite holding their own, but a long kick up the field found their defence unprepared, and after two or three players on either side had tried to get in a clear kick without any tangible result, Stirling dashed into the melee and drove the ball through from a difficult angle. It was a good goal, inasmuch as Stirling accomplished what he intended, while previously both attackers and defenders seemed afraid to put boot to the ball. An early goal means much, but it was not more than three minutes before matters were level once again.

Brown, who had several times shown a clean pair of heels to Jeffrey got across a grandly-judged centre, and Smith quite simply nodded the ball away from Joyce into the net. It looked so simply done that the spectators could scarcely realise that a goal had been scored; any way, no demonstration followed. Semple was the cause of a hot attack on Jarvis, but the Luton goalie got down to the final shot and cleverly prevented a score. At the same time he was rather badly kicked, and the game had to be stopped and Lawson's aid requisitioned, but this was not long about, and the match was quickly in progress again. The referee was not giving much satisfaction to either team, and his offside decisions were questioned pretty often. Smith was certainly well on-side and in a really promising position when Mr. Iliffe pulled him up on one occasion in particular. Still the game was fairly even all the time, and neither side would have grumbled if the scores had been equal at the interval.

Just as everyone was preparing for the referee's whistle to call half-time, a most unfortunate incident happened. By the clock, it was rather more than a minute over the regulation "45," but this might be explained on account of the temporary stoppage mentioned above, although many officials would have ignored such a slight affair. But apparently Mr. Iliffe believes in giving the spectators the full ninety minutes, for he was observed to take off time for a miskick of Chapman's which happened to go over the cheap stand in the second half, and both halves were extended by a couple of minutes at least. But to come to the incident referred to; the ball was centred from the home right wing, and Jones was standing about a yard inside the penalty area when the leather struck his outstretched arm.

There was no danger of a goal, as both backs and Jarvis were well placed, and Jones had not the slightest cause to handle; indeed, he had scarcely time to think of such a thing when the ball came over, for it was travelling at a great pace and came somewhat unexpectedly. Any way, the ball did hit his arm, and the referee, without hesitation, pointed to the fatal spot. Luton were dumbfounded for a moment, and then Jones in particular impressed upon the official that he had made a mistake. He so far gave in as to consult both linesmen, but the result was the same, for a penalty it was, and Stevenson drove the ball into the far corner of the net, and thus gave Millwall a most undeserved lead. The game was not re-started, for as the players were making their way to the centre of the field half-time was called.

Smarting under the injustice of the penalty award, Luton played strongly on the resumption, and Moody shot in finely after a spell of good midfield work, but his effort just failed. Twigg also tried to improve a couple of chances that fell his way at the other end, and indeed once he drove the ball through, but he was obviously off-side. Corners were pretty frequent, but none were well placed, and the game simply jogged along for quite a considerable period. About the most exciting incident during this stage was a finely-placed free kick taken by Stevenson, his shot striking the crossbar with a bang; a few inches lower in his aim might have spoilt Luton's chances of even one point.

Moody broke through, and Joyce once more coming well out of goal, Brown made a dash to get first to the ball, but he could not quite manage it, and the Millwall giant saved the situation. Jones did his best to convert a centre from Brown, but Abe's shot was too wide, and passed over the line for a goal kick. However, six minutes from time Smith settled on to a pass from the right, and although both Stevenson and Jeffrey were barring the way, he shook himself clear of them and neatly turned the ball into the opposite corner of the net to where Joyce had placed himself. It was a very clever goal, and fully deserved to gain the point it eventually proved to have done.

Luton were afterwards all over the Millwall defence, and several times were within an ace of taking the lead. Three minutes from the finish Smith had hard lines indeed in failing to secure a third goal. Luton were pressing hotly at the moment, and Joyce at one end of the goal was

quite a couple of yards out when the ball came to the Luton centre, and he attempted to make sure by letting drive at the opposite corner, but in doing this he got it just an inch or so too far, and the ball striking the bottom of the upright, cannoned right across the goal-mouth to Joyce, who would thank his lucky star for such an unexpected opportunity of getting the ball. If this goal had materialised, Luton would have got no more than their deserts, for they were decidedly unlucky in having their opponents leading twice during the game. Still it is curious how often during the present season Luton have done really well after their opponents have secured the lead.

Coming to individuals, it will be first asked how did McCurdy shape, and it is satisfactory to be able to say that he gave evidence of good judgment after he settled down. It was a big test of stamina to turn out with practically no real training under the conditions prevailing at Millwall, and if he confessed he had had quite enough of it at the finish, it is not at all surprising. But the fact remains that the Luton back division were safer altogether and gave more confidence than in any previous game, that is as a pair. I am not saying that either Chapman or McCurdy played as brilliantly as Hedley in the Swindon match, but on Saturday there seemed a much better understanding, and Chapman certainly kicked with much better judgment, while his tackling was as good as ever. Indeed, it was generally remarked that Semple had not been held up so effectively in any previous match this season.

It is also good to know that Bob stood the game and decidedly strengthened the middle division. He and Jones were playing splendidly together, and Bob's passes to his centre-half were at times really clever; indeed, several times during the match they took the ball down the field in orthodox forward style. On Saturday, Luton's right wing were the better pair, and although Quinn scarcely gives Brown sufficient work, matters are decidedly improving in that direction. Smith proved himself once more just the pivot Luton have been wanting, and promises to keep well in the van of Southern League goal-scorers.

Stevenson was Millwall's most prominent player, and his kicking was wonderfully clean and well-timed even with a greasy ball. He was the best back on the field, but in no other position could Millwall claim advantage over Luton, Stirling being the pick of the front rank, but no better than Brown.