

The Southern League.

NORTHAMPTON v. LUTON.

Played at Northampton on Saturday. Result:—

Northampton	6 goals.
Luton	1 goal.

The teams were as under:—

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

Northampton—Thorpe; Bonthron and Wykes; Manning, Lloyd-Davies, and McDiarmid; Walker, Walden, Whittaker, Lewis, and Freeman.

Referee, Mr. J. H. Smith (Doncaster).

Although the Fletcher system of arranging fixtures has prevented holiday dates being devoted to the meetings of Luton and Northampton, these games are still looked upon as the "local Derby" in each town, and the match at Northampton on Saturday was advertised as such. Three to four hundred Lutonians were present on the County Ground, but they were in a subdued mood all through, the early goal apparently having its effect. Both teams were called upon to make compulsory changes, and, as events turned out, the Cobblers were happy in their selection. The fact that Watford had beaten the locals on the previous Thursday left a nasty taste apparently, and the home players were anxious to put themselves right with the spectators.

Moore was the only change from the victorious side of the previous week, but this caused Moody to take the centre to enable the less experienced player to have his usual position. On the other hand, Northampton had a regular shuffle up. Bonthron was making his reappearance after suspension, but as Lloyd-Davies was called upon to take centre-half vice McCartney injured, a reserve in Wykes was given the position of left full-back and Bonthron crossed over. Forward, only the left wing were the regular pair, Whittaker coming into the centre from the extreme wing, and Walker taking his place. This made a vacancy at inside-right, which, as an experiment, was given to young Walden of the Reserves. Walden is an ex-Wellingborough Redwell Star player, and does not stand more than 5 ft. 3 in., weighing about 8 st., but on Saturday he made a most sensational Southern League debut. Still he may not always have such a gentlemanly half opposed to him, and then his lack of weight may tell against him.

Luton started in good style, and Bonthron had to rush across the field to the rescue of his partner, who had been beaten for pace by Brown. Everything promised a fast, even game, for each end of the field was visited several times during the opening four minutes, and the defence of both teams proved themselves well able to deal with the pressure and thus return the ball. But hereabouts a disaster occurred, for Walker, who was yards behind McCurdy, had the ball passed up to him from the centre of the field. The Luton players at once appealed for offside, and it is difficult to understand the referee allowing the Northampton winger to go on, for he was standing quite clear, and it was an easy situation to size up. Anyhow, Walker was not pulled up, and passing inside to Walden, the latter beat Jarvis with a sharp cross shot. It was a good attempt, and quite delighted the home portion of the crowd.

Although naturally upset at such an early official blunder, Luton more than held their own in midfield for a considerable period, and Stansfield in particular was kept fairly busy with corner kicks. Thorpe played a daring game with these, but his enterprise paid, and he invariably managed to clear the ball as it came across first time. The nearest Luton came to scoring during the opening twenty minutes was a long shot from the vicinity of the corner flag from Moore, who had gone outside to take a pass. Moore's shot would have gone just inside, and indeed appeared almost through when Thorpe dropped on to it and just managed to get it away before either of the Luton forwards could get up. From one of the numerous corners Quinn got a chance from a return from the goal-mouth, and he promptly drove the ball in low down. Unfortunately, it passed on the wrong side of the upright, otherwise it must have scored, for Thorpe was at the opposite end of the goal. A few minutes later Bob Hawkes took a pass from Quinn and tried a shot on his own. Thorpe, however, saved this in good style.

The referee, who had allowed the Cobblers' wing men to get clear away several times when they were obviously offside, now made another big blunder by awarding a penalty against Chapman for handling the ball. Really this was almost an unpardonable mistake, for Chapman fell down, and his hand just touched the ball while on the ground near the goal-line wide of the upright. The ball would have gone out for a goal-kick but for Chapman falling on it, so that the ruling was doubly unfortunate, but as Lewis drove the ball direct to Jarvis when taking the penalty, no direct harm came of the incident.

Chapman, however, was somewhat upset, and did not appear so steady afterwards. After Luton had had a couple of unproductive corner kicks, a breakaway on the part of Lewis settled the result of the match. Chapman should easily have pulled him up, but he let the crack Cobbler marksman in badly, and although Jarvis dashed out, he could not fluster Lewis, and the last-mentioned player put through the open goal. This was the real turning-point of the game, for although Luton never gave up in despair, they did not afterwards seem likely to redeem the situation. It is true still another corner fell to Luton as a result of a left-wing attack, and Stansfield placed this in fine style, Thorpe only preventing a score at a second attempt over the heads of several players. This was the only exciting incident before the interval, which came five minutes after the second Northampton goal.

The game was scarcely re-started before a lucky point went to the credit of the Cobblers. Freeman put over a centre from the first run down, which Jarvis came out to meet, but Whittaker headed away to Walden before Jarvis could gather, and Walden put in a tame sort of shot. McCurdy was in the way and should have easily prevented this netting. He slipped up at the critical moment, however, and missing the ball altogether, saw it pass between the uprights. This was a very soft point indeed, but it was only another nail in the coffin, as it were, and the excursionists gave up what little hope they had entertained.

Within a very few minutes Freeman got clean through again, and sent the ball across in great style. Jarvis came out and turned this away for a corner kick, but it did not prevent a goal, for to the surprise of the crowd Walden jumped up from nowhere, as it appeared, and headed through his third goal of the match. How he was allowed to reach the ball is a mystery, for he was by far the shortest player on the field, but the fact remains, and the spectators were almost prepared to rush on the field to congratulate him.

A dash down the field by Brown led up to Luton forcing still another corner, and this time they were rewarded, for Thorpe, with his usual tactics, came out to meet the ball without getting it away, and Moody promptly headed through the open goal. There was even now a chance to put a little better complexion on the game, and for a few minutes Luton kept up the pressure, but another brilliant rush down the field by the home forwards culminated in Lewis meeting a centre from Walker, and, with Jarvis in two minds, Lewis drove home No. 5.

For some few minutes the mist which had been in evidence since the interval threatened to stop the game, and during the closing quarter of an hour the light was very bad; indeed, the home officials were getting a bit fearful as to the match being finished. I suppose the gathering darkness must be put down as an excuse for yet another official blunder, for Bonthron undoubtedly handled in the penalty area when stopping a centre from Brown, but no notice was taken of the incident. Possibly a somewhat similar incident was missed at the opposite end of the field, for the crowd at that goal set up a great shout when Jones got the ball away on one occasion. But it was really too dark to follow the play from the stand with any certainty during the final stages.

On the whole Luton pressed at this period, but still another goal fell to the Cobblers, Whittaker beating Jarvis with what was put down as the finest goal of the match by those best able to see, of whom I am convinced Jarvis was not one, for it was by him before he could think. This last goal was only a couple of minutes from the finish.

Undoubtedly Northampton were the better side, but they were extremely lucky in getting such a big margin in their favour, for at intervals Luton were seen to considerable advantage. In front of goal, however, the Cobblers' forwards were always the more dangerous-looking quintette, and their working for openings very clever indeed.

Luton sadly missed Smith's dash in the middle, and Moore did not settle down right through the match. Apparently he had not confidence in himself, and far too readily parted with the ball. Stansfield as a consequence did not have a chance to get into position for taking a pass. Brown was probably Luton's most dangerous forward, but then he had the weaker back to face; still, it would have been better tactics to have kept the ball on his side of the field. Jones was the pick of the middle line, the captain being considerably hampered by Walden's cheeky methods, but he was such a little chap, and Bob is not the one to take advantage of any player's handicap in this particular.

Since McCurdy and Chapman have come together again the back division has been looked upon as more solid, but they fell below their standard on Saturday, and neither player was up to form. Thus Jarvis had a difficult task, and was compelled to leave his charge pretty often to try to prevent a score. Sometimes this had the desired effect, but, as the report above shows, he was helpless on other occasions.

Bonthron was the best back on the field, and his old partner, Lloyd-Davies, was a regular warrior at centre-half, albeit the latter was not too scrupulous in his methods, and Moody had several nasty knocks. Locally, Walden was the star of the combination, but this was in some measure due to his three goals, and, as a line, the Cobblers were the hottest quintette Luton have met this season.