

SOUTHERN LEAGUE.

LUTON v. WEST HAM.

THE BLUES' SENSATIONAL WIN.

The most optimistic supporter of Luton Town must honestly confess that he never expected his favourites to defeat West Ham 4-2—the most that could have been hoped for was a draw. For one thing, the “Hammers” were a good third from the top of the League table; but a more serious factor that entered into the calculation was Luton's inability to put their best side in the field.

It was certain that Smith would not be able to play, and therefore with a weak pivot—Johnson is only a moderate substitute after all—it was not likely that the attack of the home side would be very effective against such a sound defence as West Ham are known to possess. “Bob” was also away playing for England against Holland; but on such a heavy going turf the absence of the captain was not missed when his place was taken by Trueman. The question was whether Jarvis would be able to turn out; if not, Fry was scarcely capable of dealing with the visitors' sharp shooters. However, at the last moment, Jarvis decided to take his place between the uprights, and consequently the home defence had a little more confidence in itself. West Ham made only one alteration in their team, Wagstaffe deputising Piercy at centre-half.

The gate was rather a disappointment, as there were not more than 3,000 spectators present at the start. The ground was in a sodden condition, and very treacherous; while a Scotch mist passed over just as the teams took the field.

But it was a great game, and full of excitement. From start to finish, the spectators had value for their money. West Ham kicked off, and play opened in quite a sensational fashion. Webb, the visitors' centre-forward, broke through, and brought Jarvis to his knees with a brilliant drive. Luton now attacked for some time, but all they obtained was a fruitless corner. Ashton worked his way down on the wing, but Wagstaffe sent wide. Next Caldwell gave Webb a good opening, but the centre shot over. Shea was going through on his own, and must have scored, but he had been fouled before that, and Referee Horrocks called a halt, while he gave the visitors a free kick.

West Ham were now attacking desperately, but hands against Blackburn relieved Luton's lines, and Stansfield breaking away on the wing finished a magnificent run by scoring a brilliant goal, sending into the corner of the net out of Kitchen's reach. Johnson ought to have increased Luton's lead from a melee in front of the Hammers' goal. Play was now intensely exciting. Caldwell beat McCurdy, but Jarvis came out and cleared in the nick of time. From a corner, Stansfield landed the ball on the bar, and before the Hammers had cleared Quinn had added number two for Luton. The locals had now all the play, and half-time arrived with Luton leading 2 goals to love.

Resuming Caldwell ought to have scored in the first minute, kicking right at Jarvis from close range. In five minutes Quinn scored again from 20 yards' distance. After this play ruled more even, and the venue was charged with kaleidoscopic rapidity. Kitchen punched out from Quinn, and then Brown sent across the goal mouth with a lightning shot.

During a scramble in front of the home citadel it was a mystery how Luton escaped. However, a moment after Shea went through on his own. Jarvis stopped the first shot, but Ashton had no difficulty in tapping the leather into the net. After this several scrimmages took place in front of Luton's goal, but ill-luck dogged the footsteps of the visiting forwards. Lavery had to retire hurt. Luton again attacked, and Quinn scored, as also did Shea for the visitors, who finished with eight men, Randall and Fairman also being injured.

Result: Luton, 4 goals; West Ham, 2.

In the matter of goal-scoring, it was rather a peculiar game. On the state of the play, Luton did not deserve to have the lead at the interval. The first half was one of those games in which everything comes off, as they say, for one side, and nothing would come off for the other side. Though the locals played well, everyone must have been surprised at Luton's substantial lead when half-time arrived.

The second moiety was more even, and every inch of the ground was keenly contested. Considering the conditions the pace was marvelously fast. Luton were continually breaking an old rule of the game—each man hung on to the ball far too long, and in this way several good openings were missed. Quinn's two goals in the second half came rather unexpectedly, and on each occasion Kitchen was "fogged" by the intervention of one of his own backs.

It was questionable, however, whether Shea's goal ought not to have been disallowed, as to all appearances, the inside right used his hand to put the finishing touches to his shot. Realising that the game was going against them, the Hammers began to show their weight, and there was a bit of "Riley," as the visiting spectators called it, on both sides. However, it was the Hammers who suffered most, and three of their players had to leave the field. With only eight men, one would have thought that Luton would have taken advantage to improve their goal average, but the visitors managed to save their citadel from further disaster.

ODDS AND ENDS.

By doing the "hat trick" on Saturday, Quinn has seven goals to his credit, and is now only one point behind Smith.

Payne, of the Palace, now beats Shea for top position, with 20 goals, against 17 by the West Ham man.

Northampton must indeed have a number of sharp shooters, and are evidently independent of merely one or two goal getters. For the Cobblers this season Lewis has scored 11 goals, Lessons 9, and Freeman, Walker, and Whitaker 7 each.
