

Southern League.

West Ham Losses at Luton.

Two Points and Three Players.

By "Vigilant."

West Ham United were in the wars at Luton on Saturday. During the second half they lost no fewer than three of their players and had to finish with eight men. Randall, the left-half, retired with a damaged ankle about twenty minutes after the change of ends, and some ten minutes later Lavery, one of the backs, suddenly went down, and was taken off apparently with his shoulder injured. He was attended by Dr. Rose and was back again within a few minutes, but his stay on the field was of brief duration and he was followed to the dressing room almost immediately afterwards by his colleague, Fairman, who seemed to "crock" his ankle.

Altogether it was a game in which casualties formed a pronounced feature. It may have been that the awful state of the ground had a good deal to do with it, for, as is always the case when the turf is slippery, a tremendous amount of "hooking" was indulged in by the players; but, speaking generally, the play could not be said to be unusually rough. Still, the number of stoppages was quite remarkable. There must have been more than a dozen in all and they were not confined to West Ham players. Both Jarvis and Johnson had to receive attention and Quinn was lamed in the very first minute of the game, but they all seemed to get over it and the Blues did not experience the handicap their opponents suffered.

The Hammers were two goals down when the depletion of their ranks commenced, and it is not surprising therefore that they sustained their fifth Southern League defeat of the season. The eight players remaining deserve every credit for their plucky fight, but the odds were too great, and the Blues were able to maintain the advantage they established in the first half. It was their best performance against the leading teams in the League, and the score represents an improvement on last season, when the Blues beat the Hammers in the corresponding match by the only goal scored.

With the exception that Wagstaffe, who came from Norwich City, was making his first appearance at centre half in place of Piercy, and Lavery played back instead of Shreeve, the visitors were at full strength. Lutonians rejoiced at the return of Jarvis and Moody, but Smith was not yet fit and Johnson again tried his hand in the centre. Bob Hawkes was assisting the English Amateur team to smother the Dutchmen at Stamford Bridge, and this gave Trueman the opportunity of returning to Southern League football.

It was a miserable afternoon for football and there were not more than 4,000 spectators present when the teams took the field under the charge of Mr. R. Horrocks, of Farnworth. The players were:—

Luton: Jarvis; Hedley and McCurdy; F. Hawkes, Jones and Trueman; Brown, Quinn, Johnson, Moody and Stansfield.

West Ham: Kitchen; Lavery and Fairman; Whiteman, Wagstaffe and Randall; Ashton, Shea, G. W. Webb, Blackburn and Caldwell.

The first twenty minutes of the game were splendidly contested. Considering the sodden state of the ground the play reached a remarkably high standard and was brimful of incidents. Fred Hawkes, who captained the Blues, gave his side the benefit of a cross wind by winning the toss and deciding to attack the Town-end goal, but the visitors opened in much more likely fashion. Their forward work was particularly attractive, and once Webb broke clean through and drove in a beauty, which Jarvis only stopped on the ground by a magnificent effort. Dick was brought to his knees and could not get the ball away, but a free kick against the visitors for an illegal charge upon the goalkeeper was the homesters' salvation. Webb was not so effective when a grand opportunity presented itself to him immediately in front of goal, skying yards over.

The visitors were not to be shaken off, but they fell away considerably when near goal and the best shooting efforts came from Wagstaffe, who twice flashed by the post. From a corner the Blues' colours seemed likely to be lowered, but Blackburn handled just as he was breaking through the scrimmage and thus robbed himself of an open goal. So far Brown had been the only forward on the Luton side to threaten any danger, but it was Stansfield who changed the run of the game. When the attack on the Blues' goal was broken up he raced away on the left and, coming inside, he cleverly beat both the opposing half and full-back and shot clean into the corner of the net. It was a really brilliant effort, and was one of the best things Harold has done this season.

Still the game continued open and both goals underwent numerous narrow escapes. From a free kick Moody sent Johnson through and the centre seemed certain to score, when he was forcefully bundled down by Kitchen. An appeal for a penalty was not entertained and within a couple of minutes the homesters' goal was only saved by the quick-wittedness of McCurdy, who dropped back into goal and created a sensation by kicking over the bar a shot from Shea which had Jarvis completely beaten.

Luton gradually gained the ascendancy after this, and a second goal, ten minutes before the change of ends, was thoroughly deserved. The ability with which the inside forwards met the centres of Brown and Stansfield was always causing anxiety to the West Ham defence. Moody once hit the crossbar and the visitors were compelled to give numerous corners. Following one of these Fred Hawkes was fouled just outside the penalty area, and Jones sent the free kick to Stansfield, who hooked the ball back into the centre. Johnson caught it on his head and Quinn dashed up and easily put on the final touch. Johnson only missed by inches with a header half a minute later and at the other end Jarvis finely saved at full length from Wagstaffe. The visitors ought to have reduced the lead when Webb had only the goalie to beat, but he failed dismally, and the teams crossed over with the score:—

Luton 2, West Ham 0.

The aptitude of McCurdy for acting as supernumerary goalkeeper saved Luton in the first minute of the second half. Ashton got close in and had Jarvis well beaten, but Mac was at the other end of the goal and kicked away from under the bar. The play continued to centre round the Luton goal and there was no lack of excitement, but it was at the other end that the scoring was resumed. From a breakaway Quinn obtained possession and completed a clever individual effort by a fast drive from about twenty yards out, which Kitchen never looked like saving.

West Ham resolutely retaliated, and although Jarvis handed away a grand shot from Ashton the Hammers had a fine chance of scoring. Instead of shooting, however, Webb passed to Blackburn and the latter was promptly brought down. The referee gave a penalty, but the persistency of the Blues in claiming for offside induced the whistle holder to consult one of the linesmen and the result of the consultation was the award of a free-kick to Luton instead of a penalty to the visitors. The relief was, however, shortlived, as within a minute Shea cleverly broke through and shot from the left. Jarvis effected a remarkably fine stop, but he could only put the ball down in the goalmouth and Ashton walked it through.

The visitors were now persistently attacking and they kept up the pressure even after losing Randall, who was brought down by Moody. Jarvis had two nasty shots to deal with from Ashton, and on one occasion he could not clear and Blackburn was left with an open goal, but Fred Hawkes came to the rescue with a brilliant save. Directly afterwards Blackburn put through, after being given offside, and then came the retirement of Lavery, immediately followed by a fourth goal for Luton. From Stansfield's centre both Johnson and Moody had shots saved by the goalkeeper, but Kitchen was unable to recover himself after Bert's effort, and Quinn easily did the trick.

A quarter of an hour from time Lavery returned and West Ham added to the goal scoring. Ash-

ton broke through in very clever style and had a lovely shot kept out by Jarvis. From the rebound Webb sent in and struck the underpart of the crossbar. The ball bounced down into the goal, and Shea put an end to what doubts there might be as to the scoring of the point. Jarvis rushed out to the referee and claimed that Shea had handed the ball through, but the referee ruled that the goal had already been scored before the inside-right played it.

After this came Lavery's second retinement and Fairman went off a couple of minutes' later. Playing three forwards and one back, the visitors never gave up trying, and though the odds against them were great they frequently got dangerous. The only other scoring done, however, was by Quinn, and as he was ruled offside the final score was:—

COMMENTS ON THE PLAY AND PLAYERS.

The unfortunate mishaps to the West Ham players went a long way towards spoiling what had, in the earlier stages, been a particularly interesting game. It was never altogether devoid of interest because of the resolution with which the Hammers faced an uphill task, but everything was against the standard of football exhibited in the first half being maintained. The ground became nothing short of a quagmire, and with the Hammers' ranks depleted their combination was completely upset, and the play altogether became scratchy.

While they had their full number of players the Hammers' forwards excelled in attractive football and were more nippy and clever than the Blues' front line. The homesters were, however, unusually effective in front of goal and to this, coupled with their sterling defence, they owed their success. Johnson was not so conspicuous in the centre as against Crystal Palace, and the outside wingers once more carried off the honours. Still, there was not a wing to compare with Shea and Ashton, the former of whom was the outstanding player on the field. At half Jones was a tower of strength, but Trueman hardly enhanced his reputation. For the backs and goal-keeper there is nothing but praise. If McCurdy did not attain to the same standard of brilliance as Hedley it must not be forgotten that it was his intelligent anticipation alone that prevented two more goals falling to the visitors.