

Southern League.

LUTON v. MILLWALL.

Played at Luton on Saturday. Result:—

Luton	1 goal.
Millwall	nil.

The teams were as follow:—

Luton—Naisby; Chapman and Potts; F. Hawkes, Bushell, and R. Hawkes; Brown, Johnson, Smith, Moody, and Stansfield.

Millwall—Carmichael; Brice and Jeffrey; Frost, Wilson, and Blythe; Morris, Walker, J. Martin, Vincent, and Lipsham.

Referee, J. W. Baily (Leicester).

It looked something like old times on Saturday to see such a big crowd to witness the meeting of Luton and Millwall. Years ago this used to be the most attractive match of the season, and always drew a large attendance. Both clubs have experienced many vicissitudes, but this season Fortune is favouring Luton, and it was not altogether surprising to see some eight thousand spectators. The start was delayed half-an-hour to allow those who wanted to attend the opening of the Carnegie Library, and as a consequence the game was finished in a fading light.

Judging from the positions of the clubs on the League table, Luton appeared to have a fairly easy thing on, as they were at the head with eight points for five matches, whereas Millwall were a long way down with only three points for four games. Luton, too, had scored 16 goals against 7, whilst Millwall could only boast 3 against 5.

Unfortunately, however, Luton had to make some alterations, as Quinn, who has been playing so well, had not sufficiently recovered from his injury to take his place at inside-right. By the way, what changes take place in public opinion! Last season at this time there were many people in favour of dropping Quinn, whose form was regarded as disappointing, and now he is very rightly looked upon as one of the most valuable members of the front string.

His place was taken by Johnson, who had been deputising with great success at centre-half, and Bushell re-appeared in that position, though still having his finger bandaged. I think the popular idea was that less danger would have been incurred by continuing Johnson at centre-half and letting Macdonald take the inside-right position, and, as things worked out, it was evident that the popular view was the correct one.

Johnson, although an enthusiastic worker, was the weak spot in the team. His constant over-elaboration threw the forward line clean out of gear, and the bustling tactics of Millwall helped to complete the disorganisation. Smith had been a doubtful starter, but he was able to turn out, only to get into the wars again. The game had not been long in progress when he was badly kicked on the head by Jeffrey, whose action was unintentional, but reckless, and it looked as though the Luton centre-forward had been placed hors de combat.

With praiseworthy pluck, however, he soon resumed, but he received one or two more nasty knocks, and it was not surprising that there were some periods at which he did not show the unflagging zeal which usually characterises his play.

Millwall, winning the toss, took the advantage of a fairly strong breeze, and the way in which they opened the proceedings caused some alarm among the spectators. They knocked the Luton forwards right off their game, and they gave the Luton defence very little peace. Time after time they carried the ball to the vicinity of the home goal, but, luckily, they were ineffective in finish, owing, perhaps, in some degree, to weakness on their own part, but more particularly to the never-say-die methods of the Luton backs.

And let me say a word here in praise of Chapman and Potts. They have many critics, people who sigh for big, strong-kicking backs, but, after all, it is a question whether the worrying tenacity of the Luton men is not just as effective. Opposing forwards are never free of their attentions, and it is astonishing how few clear shots they are allowed to get at goal.

It was a long time on Saturday before the Millwall forwards could seriously trouble Naisby, in spite of all their efforts and their dangerous-looking rushes, but eventually the Luton custodian did have a couple of good ones to save, the first being a beauty from Walker and the second coming from Martin. In both instances Naisby proved to be perfectly reliable. When Luton did at last break through the Millwall defence, Johnson sent the ball the wrong side of the upright. A little later the visitors' goal had a marvellous escape from a centre by Stansfield, the other forwards being well up with the ball right in the mouth of goal, and then failing to get it through. Another attempt by Johnson was saved by Carmichael.

A corner for Millwall was well placed by Lipsham, and Wilson sent just by the post. Then Luton made one of their most likely-looking attacks, and Johnson missed a glorious opening. The other forwards had had chances, but when Johnson received the ball he was bang in front of goal, and had nothing to do but divert it into the net. With a wild kick, however, he accomplished the apparently impossible feat of shooting yards wide. Later on, Stansfield had the misfortune to head the ball against the bar, and the teams changed ends with a blank score-sheet.

Millwall opened the second half as strongly as they had done the first, and the home team were again all at sixes and sevens. A good shot by Walker went just by the post, Fred Hawkes put the stopper on a fine effort by Martin, and a shot from Lipsham struck the post. For the rest Naisby did all that was required of him.

After this, Luton got going a bit, and a centre by Brown placed the Millwall goal in danger, but relief was given by a foul on Carmichael. Then the home team were conceded a corner, and Stansfield, putting the ball across, Moody very cleverly headed into goal, amid tumultuous applause from the spectators. Encouraged by their success, the Luton team infused more life into their play, but could make little impression on a stubborn and strenuous defence.

Hereabouts, several of the home team met with injuries which, though not serious, did not tend to improve their play. Chapman particularly looked at one time like being almost a cripple, but he kept going and put in a lot of good work. The visitors, however, became very insistent, and provided Naisby with a fair number of opportunities of showing his skill. The custodian proved to be in the best of form, and saved and cleared very smartly, one particularly good effort being when he tipped a rasping shot from Martin over the bar.

Millwall forced several corners, and were given a free kick just outside the penalty line. The free kick made a striking impression on Smith, for he received a terrific shot full in the stomach. Luckily he soon recovered from the effects, but he will remember the game with Millwall for some time to come.

On the whole, the concluding stages of the match were considerably in favour of Millwall, but whilst they put in a lot of aggressive work, they were not specially dangerous. Luton made a few attacks, but for the most part they were quite content to maintain their one-goal lead. This they succeeded in doing, and if they just deserved their victory, it is all that can be said.

Millwall played a very hard game, but the better chances of scoring fell to Luton, who might very well have had a couple more goals in the first half. Individually, the Millwall forwards are very smart, but they have not that excellent understanding which distinguishes the Luton line at its best. The halves and backs, too, are good workers, but their football is rather of the strenuous than the scientific order.

As already stated, the Luton men were a long way below form. It is a pity that Johnson as a forward, should indulge in so much circumlocution. He is a very clever player, but allows his cleverness to run away with him, forgetting that whilst he is dodging about with the ball, good openings are being lost to his comrades. When playing half-back, he recognises that he has to get rid of the ball, and owing to that, his work in that department is much more valuable than at forward.

Rushell played a much-improved game at centre-half, and his colleagues in that line did good service, Fred Hawkes especially being in fine form. Chapman and Potts were indefatigable at back. Naisby had his first opportunity of showing what a smart goalkeeper he is, and he made the most of it. His custodianship was without a blemish.