

# Southern League.

## LUTON v. NORWICH CITY.

Played at Norwich on Saturday. Result :—

|                    |          |
|--------------------|----------|
| Norwich City ..... | 3 goals. |
| Luton .....        | 2 goals. |

The teams were as under :—

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

Norwich City—Beale; Hampson and Mackenzie; Wilkinson, Wolstenholme, and Chick; Jobling, Ingham, Rayner, Whiteside, and H. J. Leir.

Referee, Mr. F. E. Freemantle, Gainsborough.

With both teams doing so well, a great fight was expected when Luton met the Canaries, and, for once, anticipations were realised, for it was universally voted the finest game seen at Norwich this season. Fortunately, both teams were able to command full strength. The Canaries have practically a new team, for only four of their side had previously played for Norwich against Luton, while Luton numbered almost as many ex-Canaries with them, for, as is well known, three such played in a blue shirt on Saturday, two of them for the first time at Norwich. Although Alisopp was not out, the City had one old Luton player in Rayner, who figured at centre-forward. Although bearing the same initials, he must not be confused with last season's Reserve captain. Indeed, it is two seasons since the Norwich City forward played for Luton, and then he usually figured as an inside player. I do not think he played in the first team for Luton, but for several months was a regular player in the South-Eastern League. Last season he signed for Norwich, and ultimately secured a position in the Southern League eleven, but as Luton finished their fixtures with Norwich within the first fortnight of the season, he did not figure in the Luton matches.

Although during the journey down it threatened rain, the day turned out fine but dull, and a big crowd of some 10,000 turned out to welcome Luton at the Nest. The Canaries' ground is getting into shape, each year showing a big improvement, but still to a stranger seeing it for the first time, the sight is a curious one. The spectators are crowded into all sorts of odd corners, while at others the touch line is within a yard or so of someone's upstairs window. It is understood that the cost of this unique pitch exceeds four figures, so that someone has had to plank down pretty considerably to enable the Eastern Counties to possess a Southern League ground. During recent visits, Luton have caught it pretty severely at Norwich, therefore, although the game was lost on Saturday, it represented a big advance. It is doubtful if Luton did lose this particular game, but more of this anon.

Bob lost the toss, and Wolstenholme chose to play uphill to start with, and the City were promptly on the job, only to find Rayner given offside when well placed for shooting. At the opposite end, Quinn was the first to try his hand at the target, but his attempt was wild, and the ball went well over. The most dangerous attack during the opening five minutes came from Luton, and in order to stop Moody getting in his shot he was fouled by Hampson. Stansfield took the place kick, and planting the ball nicely in front, it appeared likely a goal would be the result, but Moody, who tried to get his head to the ball for a final push through, got just the merest shade too far under, and it appeared to strike the cross-bar, and was finally cleared. During the onslaught Hampson got in the wars, but after a brief stoppage, the game was continued.

In making a dash through, Rayner was brought down by Potts, and the game was stopped for a minute or two, but he was not away long, and was soon troubling Naisby, who, however, stuck to the ball from a long centre by Jobling, and the Luton goalie neatly avoided the close attention of the home centre and cleared in fine style. For a time, the Luton defence was severely tried, but they stood the storm much better than in some recent matches. During one hot attack, F. Hawkes was hurt, and retired to the touch line, Quinn dropping half back for the time being, but nothing of moment occurred, and Fred was not long away. Considering the pressure, little work was needed from Naisby, but when he was called upon he was always ready, and the home forwards were kept at bay.

Luton had a chance as a result of a right-wing run but Brown made poor use of it at the finish, and tamely pushed the ball out for a goal kick. Bushell was working hard, and made one or two attempts to break through on his own; indeed, one shot he put in was not at all a bad effort, but just failed to find the target, being a shade wide. Brown got across a nice centre, and Smith, making a dash through the backs, appeared to have a chance, but unfortunately Moody was a trifle in front, and was pulled up for offside, and thus spoilt the opportunity.

Bob Hawkes handled the ball in mid-field, but Chick, who apparently attempted to score direct, sent the ball well up the big bank, yards over Naisby's head. Only five minutes remained before the interval, when a throw-in near the corner flag led up to the opening goal. The ball, coming across the field from the right, found Whiteside with just a chance, and he took a pot shot, the ball striking the upright and turning through, Naisby having little chance. But although the time was so short, Luton managed to equalise before they left the field. Brown getting away, planted the ball well in the mouth of goal, and Mackenzie tried to get it out of danger, only to turn it through the goal himself. It was a curling shot, and would probably have screwed through in any case, but Mackenzie made certain, and Luton were well satisfied at the interval, for on the whole the Canaries had slightly the better of the argument up to this stage.

The dressing-room end of the ground is supposed to be the favourite with the Canaries, and the spectators quite expected them to draw well away. They were encouraged in this hope by an early goal by Rayner, who got in a fine shot after tricking two or three Lutonians. But contrary to the wishes and expectations of the crowd, Luton were not yet overpowered, and they put up a stubborn fight, and gradually but surely got the upper hand of their opponents. From a free kick Moody almost netted, Beale just tipping the ball over the bar. It was now a question as to how long the City would be able to retain the lead, for time after time the Luton forwards swept down the field, but the referee was very keen on offside, and just when it appeared a goal was coming, someone would be pulled up for offside in a most tantalising manner for Luton. Although probably usually correct, there were one or two very doubtful decisions by the referee, and these told against Luton. But the light was none too good, and it was difficult to judge accurately when the width of the field intervened. Ultimately, however, Stansfield and Moody engineered an opening, and Bert turned the ball nicely away from Beale into the net. It wanted about fourteen minutes to the finish, and Luton made desperate efforts to bring off a victory. Twice it appeared that Smith had a possible opening, indeed once he was right through, although several yards from goal, and he took a shot, but not with his usual judgment under these conditions, and the ball went yards wide.

During the final minutes the game was stopped twice through injuries to the City players, but there was nothing serious, and both teams were all out for the odd goal. Still each defence appeared capable of holding their own, when, less than two minutes from the final whistle, a corner fell to Norwich, and from this the goal resulted. But it is to be regretted that after such a hard-fought game a faulty ruling should lose a well earned point, for even the City directors were willing to admit it was hard lines for Luton to suffer defeat after the display they put up, although they were naturally pleased at the turn of events. The goal was scored by Ingham, but before he put through he knocked it down, and as no one stood between him and Naisby at the time, it is difficult to understand how he could be onside. But the referee was most decided, and consequently the verdict went against Luton in a most unlucky manner.

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manly.

But for the final incident the game was quite one of the best of the present season, and if it had been possible for the Luton crowd to have seen the way their players worked, they would have been satisfied even though the points were lost. Naisby did all that could be expected in fine style, but he did not have nearly so much to do as in some recent matches. Chapman and Potts gave a much more even display than usual and were not overplayed at any stage, while Chapman's placing was in advance of several of the games he has figured in. At half-back, Bushell would be given most credit, and he played his best game since coming to Luton. He was a big favourite at Norwich, and after the match several expressed the opinion that he had never been in better form than on Saturday. His comrades on either side were also seen to advantage, and the score notwithstanding, the whole defence came out of a desperate struggle with distinct credit. In attack, Luton were rather disappointing up to the interval, and at times the work was a bit ragged, but they improved greatly afterwards, and Brown and Moody were possibly the source of most danger.

Norwich have a team of workers, and they will go far. Rayner, who has filled out since he played for Luton, has developed into an opportunist centre. He does not distribute the ball so cleverly as some, but he plays the dashing game, laying well up on the backs the whole time, and has no hesitation in taking a chance shot, given the slightest opportunity. The cleverest forward the City possess is Ingham, who came direct from Rossendale, a Lancashire Combination team. He has never before played for a first-class club, and has stuck to his old club, despite several tempting offers, until induced by the new Norwich manager to come South. I believe I am correct in stating that Luton tried to get this player some three or four seasons back, but could not arrange terms. Curiously, Mr. Stansfield, the Norwich manager, was the Rossendale secretary at the time, and but for his influence no doubt Ingham would still be playing in minor football. The other new Norwich player who stood out was Mackenzie at right back, and he should do well for them. Wolstenholme acts as captain, and he is still a good general, although I have seen him play more dashing football than was the case on Saturday.