

English Cup.

NORTHAMPTON v. LUTON.

Played at Northampton on Saturday. Result:—
Northampton 5 goals.
Luton 1 goal.

Teams:—

Northampton—Thorpe; Brittan and Clipston; Manning, Lloyd Davies, and Hampson; Walden, Bradshaw, Lessons, Lewis, and McDiarmid.

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

Referee, Lieut. W. Clover (Leicester).

When the Cup draw was made some weeks ago, it was recognised that Luton would have a very stiff task at Northampton, but as the time passed, supporters of the Light Blues adopted an optimistic tone and looked forward to the result being a draw. This hope was encouraged by the fact that on the Saturday before the Cup-tie, Plymouth, one of the lowest teams in the Southern League, went to Northampton and won by a goal to nil.

The directors of the Luton Club made arrangements for three special trains to be run, and the excursion was well patronised. The first train was timed to start at mid-day, and before it was due some hundreds of people had gathered on the platform. When the train came in, there was a great rush, and as many as 20 people travelled in one compartment. The other trains also took their complement of passengers, and from Luton alone there were 1,300 excursionists.

The Luton team travelled on the first excursion train, which did not reach Northampton until five minutes to two. The players were conveyed to the ground nearly two miles distant, and at once had to change, appearing on the field of play at 2.32. Fred Hawkes, who had been a doubtful starter, turned out with the others and decided to go through with the game; Potts was ready to go out if Fred Hawkes had come off prior to the start.

Luton were thus at full strength. With regard to Northampton, it was recognised that the weak spot of the side was on the left wing, and to strengthen this successfully was a matter of difficulty. McDiarmid was regarded as the best man for the position, but he was not in the best of health, and it had been very doubtful as to whether he would be fit. On Saturday morning, however, it was announced that he was able to play, and the news pleased the supporters of the Northampton Club.

There were between ten and twelve thousand people on the ground when the game started. The sharp frosts of the past two days had made the pitch iron-hard just below the surface, which was rather slippery. This state of things favoured Northampton, who were firmer on their feet than Luton, and were able to use their superior weight to better advantage.

Smith kicked off, and almost immediately Northampton got away, Walden meeting a centre from the left and shooting on the wrong side of the net. Then Luton forced the play. A big kick forward by Rob Hawkes caused Quinn and Brown to rush in, but Thorpe cleared. Luton certainly were taking time to settle down, and two or three miskicks in front of goal looked ominous, but fortunately Wightman came to the rescue.

Following a throw-in Fred Hawkes tried a pot-shot which Thorpe caught. Then Smith, Stans-

field, and Quinn kicked the ball, but each time an opponent was in the way. At this early stage it was noticeable that Luton were trying to play ordinary League football, whereas Northampton were adopting a quicker and more open style, which was more suitable to the conditions and the occasion.

An incident which might have had an important bearing upon the result, happened only a few minutes after the start. A centre from Brown went to Moody, who headed to the centre. Smith was rushing forward between two opponents and the ball hit his leg. If only he had managed to get his foot to the ball, there might have been a different tale to tell.

Northampton, however, were far more dangerous than Luton when near goal. A centre from Walden looked serious, but Fred Hawkes rushed in at the right moment and cleared. Then there was an interesting duel between Stansfield and Walden. The Northampton outside-right got almost to the corner flag, and Stansfield kicked out of play. A grand shot from Lessons was well saved by Naisby.

The only goal of the first half was scored when play had been in progress about a quarter of an hour. A centre was put across from the right, and Naisby left it to Chapman, who should have got to the ball. He hesitated, however, and Lewis headed. Naisby was about a yard from goal, off the sawdust, and he slipped as he tried to save, the ball going into the net well out of his reach.

The point was a lucky one, but there could be no doubt in anyone's mind that Northampton were the better team and deserved to be leading. They came again, and Lessons shot over. A couple of free kicks assisted Luton, but once more the Northampton forwards swept down the field, and Naisby was called upon by Bradshaw with a low shot.

Moody forced the first corner of the match. This was taken by Stansfield, and the attack was cleared, but Bushell returned, and Thorpe had to handle. At the other end the Luton goal had a lucky escape. Lessons got through and was preparing to shoot when Lewis interfered. The result was that Fred Hawkes was able to kick behind when Lessons had seemed to have the goal at his mercy.

A rasping shot from Lewis hit the crossbar and went over. Naisby must have touched the ball, for the referee gave a corner. Brown forced one a minute later, and it produced a warm attack. The Northampton right then made the running, and Lewis had a chance, but Fred Hawkes got in the way. This was the last incident before the interval, which arrived with Northampton leading by a goal to nil.

This did not look so very bad, but five minutes later Luton's chances vanished. Immediately after the resumption Smith obtained possession close in, but Clipstone rushed across and conceded a corner. A free kick for Luton followed, but it was of no avail. McDiarmid, who, in the opinion of many of the spectators, was offside, got clear away. His centre hit Wightman on the body, but the ball was put across to Bradshaw who coolly scored with a fast low shot.

Up to this time there had been a faint hope that Luton would pull up, but now the result was practically a foregone conclusion. This fact had its effect on the game, for Northampton played with rare dash and could do nothing wrong, while Luton floundered about and were never allowed to combine. When a Northampton half-back got the ball he passed to his forwards and they generally went right away. When a Luton half got the ball he sent it forward, but his own men were usually too well marked to get far.

Of course, Luton managed to attack now and again, but they never shaped in a way that could give ground for encouragement. A dropping centre from Brown was caught by Thorpe and almost rushed through by the inside forwards; the goalkeeper threw the ball behind. Stansfield took the corner, and Thorpe had to be very smart to save a header from Moody. Northampton were soon acting on the aggressive, and Naisby kicked out a centre from the right.

The Northampton forwards were playing finely just now, and one of their movements ended in Lessons converting a centre from Walden. Almost immediately the Luton right wing went down the field, and Moody scored from five yards' range, after 18 minutes' play. After this, Naisby had to deal with shots from Bradshaw and Hampson, while Wightman was forced to give a corner in stopping Walden.

A quarter of an hour from the finish Lessons scored the fourth goal for Northampton as the result of combination between the inside men. A long shot by Fred Hawkes was caught by Thorpe, and Smith almost scored from a quick pass forward by Moody. A splendid opportunity came the way of Quinn in the shape of a centre from Stansfield, but the inside-right rushed forward with his head down, and the ball went over; if he had allowed it to drop on his body, the sphere must have rolled in.

Towards the finish play was rather scrappy, but it was only during this period that Luton showed any signs of that open game which they should have adopted at the start. Walden met a centre from the left and weakly put wide when he had a good chance of scoring. The game was almost finished when Northampton scored a fifth goal. First Chapman and then Wightman were beaten in the centre of the field, and the forwards went away in a line. Bradshaw seemed about to walk the ball through, but Naisby came out. Bradshaw shot sideways, and there was some doubt as to whether the ball would have gone in if Lessons had not put on the finishing touch.

Most of the supporters of the Luton Club were strongly of opinion that Lessons was offside when he touched through. On the other hand, I understand the Luton captain thought Lessons was on-side, but should have been pulled up for fouling Chapman near the penalty line. But, after all, this point did not make much difference. Luton were beaten by a better team on the day's play. Everything "came off" for Northampton, and it probably would again, although Luton might stand a chance on a very dry ground.

It should be remembered that Northampton is the only club which has beaten Luton at home this season, and the team is certainly one of the best Luton have met. Luton have not been playing up to their best form of late, and on Saturday they were made to look worse than an ordinary average Southern League side. The fault lay chiefly with the half-backs, who were not vigorous enough for a Cup-tie, and Chapman, although he did one or two good things in the second half, was weak.

Amongst the forwards, Moody worked very hard, but taking the game as a whole, Stansfield had little to do. Quinn was off colour, and Smith was not allowed to do much. Next to Moody, Brown was the best forward. Fred Hawkes, despite the fact that he was a doubtful starter, was the pick of the halves, and Wightman was sound at back. There was not a weak spot in the Northampton team, and at times the forwards were brilliant. The only consolation Luton have is in sharing the gate, which amounted to £417.