

SOUTHERN LEAGUE.

LUTON UNLUCKY AT COVENTRY.

DESERVED TO WIN BUT ONLY DREW.

Although Coventry is one of the nearest Southern League towns to Luton, the journey there is one of the worst. Indeed, it took no less than fourteen hours and a half to make it on Saturday. This handicap prevented Bob Hawkes going with the team, much to the disappointment of the home crowd, who have never yet seen the Luton captain, and many were the expressions of regret that he was not one of the party. Naturally, Johnson took his captain's place, and with Potts now thoroughly fit, Wightman crossed over to the exclusion of Chapman, and thereby considerably strengthened the back division. Coventry City had the identical side which beat Sheffield Wednesday the previous week, and the start was delayed a few minutes, as they posed for a photograph. The crowd, which, if not quite so numerous as might have been expected after their favourites' sensational performance, was very enthusiastic, and cheered the players again and again as they hooped into the field. The pitch, although slightly on the soft side, was in far better condition than when Luton visited Coventry last season, for at that time the mud was literally ankle deep right down the centre of the field at Swan-lane end, and the Luton backs, on that occasion, had a very difficult time of it. Previous to Saturday, both teams had won with a good margin on their own ground, Luton's two previous visits resulting in defeats by the scores of 5-2 and 6-2 respectively.

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The teams turned out as under:—

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

Coventry City.—Evans; Saul, Barnacle; Johnson, Bradley, Chaplin, Parkes, Tickle, Smith, Welch, and Buckle.

Referee.—Mr. A. G. Neale, London.

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Fred Hawkes lost the toss, and it was soon seen that the wind would rather bother the Luton defenders, for right from the start the ball was got up the field under difficulty. The first attack came from the City left wing, Buckle getting away, with Wightman well down the field. On working towards goal, he parted with the ball to Welch, and when it came out again on the wing Buckle had run forward, and was consequently correctly given offside, although not before he had made a tricky attempt to force the goal. Naisby, however, blocked the way in his best style. For a minute or so, Coventry were the more dangerous in attack. Smith, the home centre forward, once getting through nicely, pushed the ball out to his wing, and for a moment it appeared likely that the Luton goal would fall, but the return shot travelled wide for a goal kick.

Gradually Luton settled down, and, notwithstanding the handicap of playing against a tricky breeze, began to open out the game in fine style. The left wing forced the play, and Moody securing the ball within to a few yards of the goal line, midway between the corner flag and the goal, squared the ball cleverly. Smith and Quinn were both well up, and first one and then the other tried a hard drive, which appeared a sure goal, but each time the cross bar acted as goalkeeper, and nothing resulted, except hard lines, for Evans could not have got at either shot. Having found their way through the home halves and backs, Luton returned to the attack. Stansfield was the next to get into a favourable position, and he drove the ball in hard, only to have it strike Bradley and rebound away from danger. Still, it was evident Luton could not be kept out much longer, unless Evans was to bear a charmed existence, and when a free kick was awarded some forty yards out, a way was found by which to get the ball into the net. Johnson took the place kick with splendid judgment, and Quinn, receiving, neatly turned the ball over to Smith, and the latter easily scored. It was a well worked for point, for the whole movement was cleverly done. Quinn was awkwardly placed for a clear shot, while, of course, Evans was shaping to receive the ball from this quarter, and he was out of position when it came from the other end of the goal mouth.

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Luton seemed more than likely to add to their score, and Stansfield had very hard lines with a grand shot, which hit the cross bar. The ball came out to Brown, who forced a corner, but nothing came of this. Probably Luton were robbed of a second goal when the referee pulled up Smith and Moody for being offside, with both backs yards nearer Evans than either of the Luton forwards. It can only be judged he must have overlooked either one or the other, for, on the whole, Mr. Neale made comparatively few mistakes. Therefore, he must be forgiven for this slip, although the crowd laughed heartily at such a palpable blunder. Another bit of bad luck came when Smith, for the fourth time in the match, forced the ball on to the cross bar without getting it through. From now to the interval, it was a case of Coventry hard put to it to keep out the Luton forwards, and they so far succeeded that the score at half-time read:—

Luton	1
Coventry	0

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The first attack of the second half was initiated by Stansfield, but Smith was given offside, a very close affair indeed, for he appeared practically on a line with the backs. But, on the whole, Luton were not doing so well as in the later stages of the first half. Wightman came in for a shout of "turn him off" when Smith went down as the result of a collision near the half-way line. As a matter of fact, Wightman simply stood his ground while the City forward made a flying leap for the ball. Anyway, the home centre had to be carried off, and it appeared he had met with a severe injury, but after about ten minutes he returned to the field, and seemed little the worse for the shaking up. Curiously, during his absence, Coventry had a greater share of the play, and for the only time during the match Naisby's charge encountered a sustained attack. But the Luton defence held out, and finally this hot siege was repulsed, and the game became more open.

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Luton's Smith managed to slip by Saul, and drove the ball in hard, only to find Evans in form, and he caught the ball and threw away. Another goal would have quite settled matters, but about a quarter of an hour before the finish, Luton met with a piece of decidedly bad luck, see-

ing the accident robbed them of a well-earned point. The ball was in mid-field when F. Hawkes and Bushell both went to punt away at the same moment, Bushell, at the finish, left to to Fred, who gave it a mighty kick. Bushell, in attempting to get clear, actually got in the way, and the ball cannoned off him right out to Buckle, who, of course, was clear of Fred Hawkes's attentions, seeing that the acting captain was in mid-field as already explained. Buckle dropped the ball into the mouth of goal, and although Naisby saved the first attempt it was again returned and found its way through, Buckle being the one to finally touch it.

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A great shout of relief went up at this unexpected goal, and the home players were urged to buck up and get another, but they seldom looked likely to do this. Indeed, Luton forced the play, and at least once had hard lines, when Quinn just failed to gather the ball as it came across within a few yards of goal. The light was now getting very bad, and it would have been a matter of sheer misfortune if Luton had come away without a point after their first half superiority. Result:—

Luton	1
Coventry	1

COMMENTS ON THE GAME.

It was a pity the 1,300 disappointed Lutonians who visited Northampton did not see the fine work of their favourites at Coventry. Really, there was no comparison between the two exhibitions. If Luton had been leading by five or six goals at the interval, it would not have been very surprising to the spectators present, whatever it might have been to those away. Naisby was not at all over-worked during the match, for Wightman and Potts were always on top of the City forwards. They fitted into each other's play beautifully, and were far better than the home pair, which, it is true, is somewhat of a change. Of the halves, Fred Hawkes was perhaps the pick, but his comrades did fine work at times, and Johnson was by no means the worst half-back on the field. Luton's forwards were much better than in any recent match, as a line, although even yet they are not on their September form, as individuals. Moody was easily the best of the bunch, and his work was extremely fine at times, although he did not appear to get quite so many scoring positions as usual. Next to him, Brown should be placed, although Smith, at times, did splendid service, while Stansfield was often a source of trouble to Saul and Co.

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Undoubtedly, Coventry's star artiste was Evans, and he deserves all the credit for saving his side a league point. Bradley played a strong game without being particularly brilliant, and the most effective forwards were the two wingers, Buckle and Parkes, although the last mentioned was a bit wild when centring the ball.