

SOUTHERN LEAGUE.

LUTON LOSE AT WEST HAM.

BUT PUT UP A GOOD GAME.

The defeat of Luton at West Ham on Saturday was not surprising considering the excellent form shown by the London club this season in both the Southern League and the English Cup Competition. In the former they are third, having lost only five games this season, and they are one of the three Southern League teams still left in the Cup. Two prominent members of the team are Kitchen, the goalkeeper, and Shea, the clever inside right. The latter was absent from the Hammers' team on Saturday, as also was Webb, who was engaged in the Amateur International match against Wales. Luton, on the other hand, were quite at full strength, Bob Hawkes resuming his place at left-half.

There were 8 000 spectators present, this being the smallest gate for West Ham this season. The pitch was in excellent condition for football, but a cross wind that was blowing made it rather awkward to judge the flight of the ball. Although West Ham deserved their victory, they have a lot to thank their goalkeeper, Kitchen, for, especially during the first half, when the Luton forwards created quite a good impression. During the latter portion of the game, however, the home team's half-backs were in fine fettle, and consequently Smith and Co. found it difficult to settle down. The passing of the Luton forwards at times, however, was positively brilliant, and they experienced extreme hard luck in not finding the net on several occasions.

Individually, Brown was the best forward, and at times, Moody and Stansfield were responsible for some clever work. Although he failed to score, Smith put in some good shots. Naisby showed himself to be a capable custodian, but Wightman and Potts were hardly at their best. The former was not as safe in kicking as usual, and Potts was completely off form. Perhaps the best man on the Luton side was R. Hawkes, whose form reminded one of the time when he was one of the best half-backs in England. He showed extraordinary judgment in anticipating passes, and in this way broke up many of the home team's promising attacking movements. Luton are now eleventh on the table, and to-morrow (Saturday) play Norwich, who have gained one point less than the Strawplaiters this season. Although Queen's Park proved the danger of prophesying, I hardly think Luton will lose.

The opening goal of the match was scored less than a minute from the start. Ashton, who seemed to be in an offside position, snapped up a pass and centred into the goalmouth for Kennedy to head past Naisby. The spectators were too surprised to cheer, and from the subsequent play, it was extremely hard luck for Luton to be in arrears thus early in the game. The visitors, however, were by no means disheartened, and the forwards began to play up to their reputation. Time after time they worked their way by delightful combination through the opposing defence, but Kitchen was too clever to be beaten.

Quite a dozen good shots were saved by this capable custodian in quick succession, the half-backs as well as the forwards having a go. Several corners were gained, but Kitchen generally managed to clear somewhat easily. Once, however, Moody got his head to the ball first, but the attempt was just a little bit too high. Kitchen's charge also underwent a narrow escape soon afterwards. Stansfield broke away and centred into the goalmouth, where both Smith and Quinn were waiting, but by a bit of luck for West Ham, the ball struck the goalkeeper on the knee and was eventually cleared.

On another occasion, Moody's thrustfulness caused Kitchen to turn the ball towards Smith, whose hurried shot passed just wide of the post. A few minutes before the interval, Stansfield netted from a centre from Brown, but the referee gave him offside. This was an extremely doubtful decision, as Brown seemed to pass the ball slightly backwards. This was practically the last incident before half-time, and West Ham managed to retain their lead. It was acknowledged, however, on all hands, that Luton were extremely unlucky to be in arrears.

When the second half had been in progress some minutes, it was seen that Ashton, the Hammers' outside right, was limping, and for the rest of the game Potts was howled at by the crowd, who evidently adjudged him responsible for Ashton's injury. This, no doubt, had its effect on the back's subsequent play, and considering what a clean game Potts plays, it was very hard luck that he should be singled out for this treatment. West Ham now had much more of the game, and were soon two goals to the good. This second point was somewhat lucky, however. Caldwell secured the ball after a couple of corners, and sent in a fine cross shot which Naisby cleared.

The ball somehow found its way in front of Piercy, who took what must have been a speculation shot. The sphere passed through a crowd of players and eventually hit the upright and glanced into the net. This goal came as a great surprise to everyone, perhaps even to the scorer himself. In the closing stages of the game Luton rallied, and tried hard to reduce the lead. The home team, however, packed the goal and so kept the ball away. Moody nearly scored once, however, his header being only just turned away from the goal in the nick of time. Eventually time came with the score

WEST HAM 2, LUTON 0.