

Southern League.

NORTHAMPTON v LUTON.

Played at Northampton on Saturday. Result:—

Northampton 3 goals.

Luton 1 goal.

The teams were as follow:—

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

Northampton—Thorpe; Brittan and Clipstone; Manning, Lloyd-Davies, and Hampson; Walden, Bradshaw, Lessons, Lewis, and Freeman.

Referee, Mr. A. Shallcross (Leek).

Luton were able to field the same side for the fourth consecutive match, but it was not until the last minute that it was decided to play. Wightman, and Webb was wired for and attended the station prepared to make the journey. On Wednesday, Wightman was ordered to bed by the doctor, and did not come out all the next day, and although he felt decidedly better on Friday and wished to play, it was only just before the train for Northampton came in that it was finally decided to risk it and let him turn out, and therefore Webb was left at home for the South-Eastern League match.

Although the usual excursion was run to Northampton, it was not patronised to the same extent as in former years; still, there was a fair sprinkling of light blue favours on the ground when the teams turned out. The gate, however, was by no means a large one, and 5,000 would be a liberal estimate of the attendance. Lessons kicked off, and immediately passed the ball out to Walden, who was at once tackled by Potts. The two players really ran into each other, and the little winger went down rather awkwardly, and it was at once seen he had got the worst of it. The crowd were quick to resent this incident, and Potts was roundly hooted, and angry cries were set up for his removal from the field. There was nothing to warrant such a severe ruling, although it appears that Potts, in bringing his foot down, stepped on Walden's foot and damaged the latter's ankle rather badly. The game was stopped for several minutes while Walden's boot and stocking were removed and his foot massaged. Eventually he was carried off the field, but was soon able to resume. The first corner fell to Luton, but Clipstone saved the situation and set his forwards going with a big kick down the field, but this movement was temporarily repulsed, and then Manning, with a fine attempt, struck the crossbar, whilst Lewis put the ball by for a goal kick from the rebound.

Although neither goalkeeper was having very arduous work, there were incidents in front of each goal which promised definite results, but on both sides the necessary finish was lacking. At first, Luton were the more aggressive lot, but not meeting with success, their attack fell away, and, quick to realise this, the Cobblers' vanguard were soon to monopolise the game for some time. A fine run by Freeman was unsuccessful through Potts dashing across and charging down the centre, and he got hooted for his daring. As a matter of fact, he had only to go for the ball to be greeted with booing from the local spectators all through the first half.

A corner resulted from this, and Lessons got in a sharp attempt which struck Wightman's hands, and loud appeals were made for a penalty, but the referee paid no heed to these, and the game proceeded. However, 25 minutes after the start the Cobblers scored. Lewis had taken a centre from Walden, and although at a somewhat difficult angle for scoring, he let drive, and the ball went into the net off Wightman's foot. Naisby was evidently deceived by the break put on the ball by coming into contact with Wightman's foot, for he appeared to be shaping quite naturally to take Lewis' shot.

Ten minutes from their first success, Manning put the ball ahead to Lessons, and he sprinted between the Luton backs and forced Naisby to come out of goal in an attempt to intercept the shot. This movement appeared to have accomplished its object, for to get clear of Naisby, Lessons was compelled to travel over to the right of the goal, and the ball being scarcely under control, appeared to be going behind for a goal kick. Lessons, however, when almost level with the upright several yards wide, screwed the ball between the sticks before Naisby could get back.

Two corners fell to Luton, Thorpe lifting the first on the top of the net and punching away the second. Still, as a rule, play was somewhere near the Luton penalty area, and but for strong defensive work on the part of Wightman and Potts, other goals would have come along, but nothing tangible resulting. The interval came with the Cobblers enjoying a clear two goals' lead.

The second half opened in more promising style for Luton, and Moody got in a couple of fine attempts from the wing, and Thorpe had considerable difficulty in preventing a goal. Indeed, although he succeeded in pulling down the second he could not hold the ball, and Quinn dashing up appeared to have a good chance, but the ball rose quickly from Tommy's shot and passed high over the bar. But within ten minutes a quick pass from Fred Hawkes came to Smith, and he neatly turned it through, although he had at least four players immediately between him and the goal. It was very cleverly done, and quite deserved the congratulations Jack got from his comrades. For the next ten minutes the Cobblers were for the most part defending. Thorpe, in his usual daring manner, left his goal and prevented Moody getting in his shot, but failed to gather the ball, which went out to Stansfield, and Harold tried to improve the occasion, only to find Lloyd-Davies had dropped back into the goal-mouth, and managed to clear from danger. Further work for Thorpe came from Brown, who cleverly took the ball on the touch-line and put in a high shot, which came back to him, and he promptly returned, only to find Thorpe, although troubled by the close attention of Quinn and Moody, just able to dodge his opponents and ultimately clear.

One or two spasmodic attacks were set up by Northampton, but all the sustained work came at the opposite end of the field. Two minutes before time Thorpe was pretty busy repelling shots, for Luton literally swarmed the home goal in a desperate attempt to earn at least one point for the season against Northampton. It is difficult to discover just how the goal was kept at times, for several real scoring attempts were put in, but Thorpe's charge appeared to have a charmed life, and then, hey presto! the ball came out from the ring of players, and Walden got clear away with it. Taking it well down the field, he crossed to Lessons, and the latter easily beat Naisby with a good shot. This was the closing kick of the match, and gives the result quite a fictitious appearance, for Luton fully deserved to halve the points for their brilliant work in the second half. It was not until after the interval that the Luton forwards exhibited their well-known skill, and for the first time in the series of three games with the Cobblers this season gave Brittan and Co. a taste of their real merit. For somehow each time previously when meeting Northampton they have been right off their usual form. In the second half, the whole five put in all they knew to retrieve the bad start, and it was sheer bad luck they did not equalise, and real disheartening to have another last minute goal put on by their opponents. This season these have been quite a feature of Luton's matches, and but for such happenings they would have been seriously challenging the leaders.

Northampton possesses one of the best defences in the Southern League, and on each occasion when they have met Luton they have been right on top of their form. Their attack was somewhat uneven on Saturday, and Freeman and Lewis were by far the better wing and gave Wightman considerable trouble. Walden is a very clever player, but the local crowd are rather inclined to over-do the hero worship, and this may tend to spoil him if they do not look out.