

SOUTHERN LEAGUE.

LUTON UNLUCKY TO LOSE AT NORTHAMPTON.

Cobblers Score with the Last Kick of the Match.

For several reasons there was not the old time enthusiasm about the return Southern League match at Northampton. Naturally, the heavy Cup-tie defeat damped the ardour of Lutonians who usually accompany the team to Bootopolis, while the two Cup-ties in town on Saturday appealed to others as a strong counter attraction. Therefore, the excursion was poorly patronised, and the hundred or so who did make the journey were to a great extent lost on the County Ground, and there was little of the usual bandi-age which tends to make matters lively on these annual outings. Both teams made one change from the Cup-tie elevens. Pott's was in the Luton team to the exclusion of Chapman, but as a matter of fact, since that memorable occasion this has been the order of things with the Luton defence, and, therefore, was to be expected. On the Northampton side Freeman took McDiarmid's place at outside left, and as both Chapman and McDiarmid figured in the South Eastern League match at Luton, it must be taken both teams were at full strength by official selection.

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The action of the Northampton officials in taking that £900 bribe to replay their Cup-tie at Newcastle has had its effect on the local gates, and it was by far the smallest crowd which has gathered together for this encounter for several seasons. It looked a bit curious to find no spectators the full length of the field on the cricket side of the pitch, but since the ground alterations this is the regular order at Northampton except for big occasions. The players lined up as under:—

Luton: Naisby; Wightman and Pott's; F. Hawkes, Bushell, and R. M. Hawkes; Brown, Quinn, Smith, Moody, and Stansfield.

Northampton: Thorpe; Brittan and Clipstone; Manning, Lloyd-Davis, and Hampeon; Walden, Bradshaw, Lessons, Lewis, and Freeman.

Referee: Mr. A. Shallcross (Leek).

The game opened with quite a sensational incident, or at least the local spectators did their best to make it one, for right away from the kick-off the ball came out to Walden. Potts dashed into him to prevent his getting away, and down went the little Cobbler. The two players appeared to practically walk into each other, and Potts in some way stepped on Walden's foot, and the latter's ankle was apparently wrenched rather badly. Anyway, it took quite a time before the game could be resumed, and eventually Walden was carried to the side of the pitch for further attention. Meanwhile the crowd kept up a continuous appeal for Potts' removal from the field, but the referee quite rightly did not fall in with their ideas, for, although Potts' offence was undoubtedly a foul, it was quite an accident. The actual injury was not at all a serious one, and might have happened to anyone. As a matter of fact, it was in no way to be compared to the incident at Luton, when Quinn was brought down so badly and practically placed out of action for the remainder of the game. But the Northampton crowd have placed Walden on a pedestal, and it seems quite a crime to attempt to tackle him. Apparently the only function expected of the back who has the task of meeting him is to provide unlimited occasions for the spectators to chuckle whenever Walden gets by him. The Cobblers' outside right, who made a sensational first team debut against Luton last season, is very clever, and naturally is able to do this pretty frequently during a game, but he cannot be allowed to run absolutely free by opposing defenders. Potts was the target for all sorts of abuse, and during the first half never kicked the ball without being roundly hooted for his pains. This placed him at a big disadvantage, for he several times hesitated to tackle Walden, who, by the way, was not off the field for more than a few minutes.

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When the game was resumed it was quite tame for a considerable period, and neither side could claim any material superiority. The closest incident to scoring was a hard drive from Bob Hawkes, which hit Lloyd-Davis in the mouth of the goal and rebounded into mid-field out of danger. At the opposite end of the field Manning hit the bar from a left wing pass, but such incidents were not at all frequent, and the half back lines of both teams were holding the attack well in hand. There was a rather funny incident when Fred Hawkes, standing on the line, caught the ball as it was going out of play. He placed himself for the throw-in, but the referee gave a free kick to Northampton for hands against Fred, who, in his opinion, was in play. This award came to nothing, for Walden got offside from the place kick.

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Moody sent in a hard ground drive, which Thorpe saved in fine style, but play gradually went in favour of the home side, the visiting forwards not being able to settle down so well as usual, and with the Cobblers improving. Naisby's charge had several narrow escapes. Bradshaw appeared a certain scorer when Freeman, rounding Wightman, put the ball right across to the inside right, who had no one near him, but the ex-Sheffielder lifted the ball just a shade too high, and it passed just over the bar. But it was not long before a goal came along, and then it was somewhat unexpected. Lewis put in a long shot without any particular powder behind it, but it just touched Wightman's leg and was turned towards the goal. Even then Naisby seemed to be shaping to pick it up easily when, to everyone's surprise, the ball tamely rolled into the net. It appeared that the twist on the ball caused it to swerve and break away from Naisby's reach, practically on the goal line.

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Following this, Northampton were much the better side right up to the interval, but only one other goal came along, this being netted by Lesone, who bored his way clear. On Naisby coming out to meet him, he swerved to the right and screwed the ball through an open goal. Interval score:—

NORTHAMPTON	2
LUTON	0

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Fortunately, Luton improved greatly in the second half, and right from the re-start commenced to sling the ball about, and gave Thorpe no anxious moments. Quinn was well on the occasion, when Thorpe pulled down them on the opposite wing. Indeed, he

seemed to be standing by the side of the upright when the ball fell at his toe, but he somehow managed to get it over the bar, greatly to the relief of the Northampton crowd. As a rule Thorpe came out to meet the centres as they came across, and it was several times a close thing as to whether he would get to the ball before Moody or Smith, but, aided by a shade of luck, more than once he just managed it.

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Most of these dangerous looking movements came from Brown's work on the right, and hence most opportunities hereabouts came to Moody and Smith. But when the goal actually arrived, it was through the agency of Fred Hawkes, seeing he put the ball well up in the goal mouth. At first it appeared to be travelling towards the net from Fred's own attempt, but it would have gone a trifle wide for a goal kick but for Smith, who cleverly turned the ball right away from Thorpe into the net. This success was well deserved, and put new life into the game, and to the surprise of the locals, they were compelled to defend to some purpose to retain the lead. Luton's first rank were giving the Cobblers' supporters their first glimpse of their real form, and shots were being continually saved by Thorpe, but so well did the local defenders concentrate their efforts that few real openings presented themselves for all the pressure put up.

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The last minute of the match saw a repetition of that hot attack put up against Portsmouth just before the interval of the previous Saturday, and it appeared certain the equaliser must come along, but the danger was eventually avoided, and the ball going out to Walden, he raced away and centred to Lessons, who put through the Cobblers' third goal with the last kick of the match. It was a sensational ending, and so an entirely wrong impression of the game is given by the final score:—

NORTHAMPTON	3
LUTON	1

COMMENTS ON THE PLAY AND PLAYERS.

It was a curious game, for in the first half Northampton had much the better of the exchanges and deserved their lead, but in the second half Luton were much the better side. It was admitted by the local critics that the Cobblers' forwards played in the first half the finest game they have done for several weeks, but this was no better than the work of Luton after the change of ends, and therefore it would have been quite fair if the points had been equally divided. It speaks well for the splendid fight Luton put up, seeing they were a couple of goals down at the interval. Even to have lost by 2-1 would not have been so bad, but that third goal was a very unlucky incident. It was entirely brought about by the desire to force the play and get the equalising goal, for when this attack was eventually repulsed and the ball came out of the crowd of players in the Northampton goal-mouth, Walden and Co. had practically a clear field, and Naisby stood helpless when Lessons secured the ball in mid-field.

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Wightman, who was a doubtful starter up to the last minute, played a fine game, and Potts backed him up well. Bushell was possibly the most in evidence among the half backs, but his wing comrades also did some grand work. As will be gathered from the report, most of the good forward work came in the second half, and Brown was not far removed from the best player on the field, while Smith played a clever game in the centre. Moody did not get so many chances as the previous week. Still, he played well and gave Stamesfield many fine passes.

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Northampton's best wing were Freeman and Lewis, and taking the game through, Walden was not so much in evidence as usual. Thorpe kept a good goal, but the chief asset of Northampton appears to be the grand pair of backs they possess in Brittan and Clipstone, while Lloyd-Davis is a good stumbling block at centre half.