

LUTON FOOTBALL NOTES.

By "The Goalie."

SOUTHERN LEAGUE.

A TALE OF TWO PENALTIES.

ANOTHER HOME DEFEAT.

When is Luton's luck going to turn? This is the question that is exercising the minds of all who are interested in the fortunes, or rather misfortunes, of the Luton Town Football Club, for the past few weeks have resulted in nothing but disaster. In the first place, Walker was injured early in the Norwich game, and was not only useless for the rest of the match, but had to be dropped against Millwall. In this game, Luton earned a well-deserved point, but paid dearly for it, as both Potts and Moody were so badly injured that they could not turn out against the Crystal Palace. Walker, too, was troubled again with his thigh, and had to change places with Ernie Brown at outside right. In spite of this, Luton's depleted forces had the better of the game, but were robbed of the points by a cruel piece of misfortune.

During the second half, Brown took advantage of a miskick by one of the visitors' backs, and ran the ball right up to the Glaziers' goal. He had only Johnson to beat, and was about to shoot into the net when he was tripped. The referee instantly awarded a penalty, from which it would have been only poetic justice if Luton had scored, but to everyone's dismay, Bob Hawkes missed the goal altogether. Soon afterwards Wightman was adjudged to have used improper methods in clearing in front of Naisby, and so the Palace were given a penalty, from which Woodhouse scored. Thus the foul tactics of the visitors in the first instance actually went in their favour, while Wightman's offence was in no way such a bad one, as the visitors were not confronted with an open goal. It would have been little wonder if the home team had then lost heart, but they made one or two gallant but ineffectual efforts to retrieve the situation, and before the close Johnson had many an anxious moment.

The best player on the Luton side was Brown. In the first half, he was responsible for some sparkling runs and dangerous centres, and when in the second half, the breakdown of Walker placed additional responsibilities upon him, he rose to the occasion as nobly as he did in the Norwich match. Stephenson showed some improvement on his recent displays, but he is far too prone to delay his passes, while he is rather weak in trapping the ball. Walker played well until his injury asserted itself, and even then he did one or two good things at outside right. On the left wing, Lashbrooke and Stansfield did some good things, and there seemed to be a good understanding between them. The halves were good and nothing more. At back Wightman was sound until after the unfortunate penalty incident, when he became rather wild in tackling and purposeless in kicking. Ashton was frequently outwitted by Garrett, but he showed considerable resource in holding up men who had got the pace of him. He would be much more effective if he would take the ball on the volley instead of waiting for it to bounce. Naisby was his old self, and had no chance with the penalty shot.

The Glaziers are a hefty lot of fellows, and as well-balanced a team as I have seen at Luton this season. The star of the side is the goalkeeper, Johnson, and his display on Saturday by no means belied his reputation. The forwards were not so clever as Luton's, as far as midfield work and combination was concerned but they played a forceful game and were dangerous in front of goal. The backs, too, were steady, and far better than the Luton pair.

Bob Hawkes losing the toss, Woodhouse kicked off in dull weather before 6,000 spectators. Fast midfield play was seen at the start, both defences being safe. Then the Luton forwards, led by Stephenson, swung the ball about from player to player in fine style, but they were repulsed, and, racing down the wing, Garrett shot straight at Naisby when well placed. Luton now returned to the attack, and receiving from Bob Hawkes, Lashbrooke almost scored with a swerving shot which beat the goalkeeper, but passed over the top corner of the net. After a somewhat sustained attack by the Palace, Johnson seemed to foul Stephenson in clearing a shot from Stansfield, but the referee refused to give a penalty in spite of the confident appeal from the Luton players.

Luton then swarmed round Johnson, but the latter played magnificently, and prevented a score. At the other end Naisby had to save a smart header from Hewitt. Stephenson next received the chance of a lifetime, but he skied the ball over from three yards' range after the Palace goal had escaped luckily from Walker. Luton were now having most of the play, but could gain nothing but corners. When the Palace got going again, first Garrett and then Davies put the Luton goal in jeopardy, but both sets of forwards were out of luck. Injuries to Wightman and Bushell caused temporary stoppages, and play became tame towards the interval, which came with the score sheet blank.

On resuming, Walker, who limped somewhat, changed places with Brown at outside right. After a quiet opening, Luton gained a corner following a free kick, but Bushell fired over. Then came Luton's piece of bad luck which probably robbed them of victory. One of the Palace backs missed a centre from Stansfield. Brown had a clear course for goal, and ran the ball to within a few feet of Johnson to make sure of scoring. When about to shoot, he was tripped by Bulcock, and to the disappointment of the spectators, Bob Hawkes shot from the resultant penalty about two feet wide of the goal.

Free kicks against the Palace for fouls now became frequent, but Johnson's charge seemed charmed. Hughes caused Naisby to tip over from a long drive, and the Luton goal narrowly escaped. From the resultant corner, Naisby saved grandly from Hewitt, and the Luton backs had to indulge in long kicking to keep the persistent Palace forwards out. At last Woodhouse converted a doubtful penalty given against Wightman. Both goals were now visited in turn, but as in the first half, the game degenerated into a scramble, the result being:—

CRYSTAL PALACE 1, LUTON 0.

COMMENTS ON THE PLAY AND PLAYERS.

The game was fast and at times exciting, but it would have been much more interesting and satisfactory if the Palace team had been cleaner in their play. In the first half especially, fouls were frequent, and the game was frequently stopped through the referee finding it necessary to call the visiting players to order, and in one or two instances he administered a severe caution. But even then several glaring infringements escaped his notice, and when one of the Luton forwards was deliberately kicked, another hustled off the ball with a vicious push, and another badly tripped, it was not surprising to hear indignant shouts from the spectators.

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The Luton men played well, and it was nothing but downright bad luck that prevented them from gaining two badly-wanted points against the Palace. What could have been more unfortunate than that shot of Stephenson's from only two or three yards out, with the Palace goalkeeper down? The ball struck one of the goalkeeper's legs as he lay at full length across the goal mouth, and, shooting up, soared over, instead of under, the bar. And Bob Hawkes' attempt at a penalty goal!

Standfield and Brown were the stay of the forward line, and the latter especially worked hard to retrieve the fortunes of the game when he changed places with Walker, who had become disabled. In the half-back line, Bushell and Fred Hawkes put in some excellent work, and Wightman seemed to have recovered something of his form at back, though he had a nasty shaking up once, and had to receive the attentions of "Billy" Lawson. Naisby in goal was as safe as ever.