

Southern League.

WEST HAM v. LUTON.

Played on the Boleyn Castle ground on Saturday. Result:—

West Ham	3 goals.
Luton	nil.

The teams turned out as under:—

Luton—Naisby; Wightman and J. Ashton; F. Hawkes, Bushell, and R. Hawkes; Brown, Shepherd, Moody, Lashbrooke, and Johnson.

West Ham—Hughes; Rothwell and Glover; Whiteman, Woodards, and Randall; Ashton, Shea, G. S. Webb, Harrison, and Morrison.

Referee, Mr. A. Hargreaves (Blackpool).

At the commencement of the season the Hammers were boomed as the coming champions, but for a few weeks they did very poorly, and were well in the bottom half of the League. Much of this failure to realise expectations was put down to Geggus, who made many serious mistakes in goal, and the week previous to Luton's visit his place was taken by Hughes, who had only a local reputation, the only clubs of any standing with which he has been associated being South Weald, and for a few weeks this season Hoffman's Athletic, a Chelmsford team. In the match against Millwall he quite pleased the critics, and therefore it was no surprise to find him guarding the sticks on Saturday. As a matter of fact the same side which proved victorious against the Dockers faced the depleted Luton team.

Luton's front string bore quite an unfamiliar appearance, but it was the best that could be raised under the circumstances. Stephenson was dropped again, and although badly handicapped by a broken bone in his hand, Moody was given the centre position, his hand being specially bound up by the club doctor on Saturday morning to minimise the risk of further injury during the game. Johnson made his initial Southern League appearance of the season at outside-left as substitute for Stansfield, after a trial spin in this position at Colchester the previous Thursday.

On approaching London, there were indications that November fogs might prevent play, but although dull, the conditions were favourable in the Upton Park district at any rate at the start of the game, but it was evident at half-time it would be touch-and-go before the finish. This proved to be the case, and seven or eight minutes before the close the referee did consult his linesmen. He decided to continue, and the game went the full regulation time, but it was practically impossible to see the ball on the ground for quite a quarter of an hour of the second half.

Luton opened up in very promising fashion, a nice pass across the field being snapped up by Brown, who raced clean through, finally dropping in a fine centre, which Rothwell just managed to head away with Moody in close attendance. After this the ball was returned to the other end of the ground, and Wightman let in Harrison, but recovered quickly and relieved with a big kick. For a few minutes the Hammers were the aggressors, and forced a couple of corner kicks. But the nearest they came to breaking down Naisby's charge was a hot cross attempt from Harrison, and this the Luton custodian ably dealt with.

After a quiet spell, Wightman was tricked by Webb and the ball was put over to Shea, who tried a shot. This once more was saved in good style, and the return was met by Randall, who took a flying shot, which, however, missed the target. Then Luton got a corner from a burst through on the part of Brown, a decision which did not please the crowd by any means, but as nothing tangible came of this it was soon forgotten. The referee hereabouts was very sharp on offside infringements and several times pulled up Webb, who was very indignant, and the crowd were rather demonstrative, although the ruling official was quite correct in every case when he pulled the Hammers' forwards up.

Webb was playing to the gallery a deal, and after going off for a few minutes, returned, taking up his position at outside-right, but he did not stop there for long, and stood well up the field waiting for the ball to be put up to him in his old style at centre. The Luton goal had rather a lucky escape when Naisby, evidently taken by surprise by a sharp pass back from Wightman, allowed the ball to drop through his fingers. Fortunately he had come out a yard or two, and was able to recover his mistake before any of the home forwards could get up to improve the slip. One of the best attempts of the day was made by Bob Hawkes, who let drive from quite forty yards' range, and the ball only just sailed over the crossbar.

It was almost immediately after this that the Hammers opened the score through Webb, who netted with a long cross shot. The shot itself was a fine one, but without doubt Webb was well off-side when he first received the ball, and after the splendid way the referee had detected infringements of this kind, it was rather wonderful he did not pull the Hammers' centre up at once.

On the whole, up to this stage play had gone slightly in favour of the home side, but still it was tantalising to have a goal allowed which was not according to rules. Another slice of bad luck came along when Glover handled just inside the penalty area from a pass by Brown, and the referee failed to notice the offence, while just on the interval Hughes had a marvellous let-off when the ball was put right into the mouth of goal by Brown, and Moody just failing to gather it a yard or so out, it travelled to Lashbrooke, who, although a trifle wide, was unmarked. It looked any odds on a goal, but the Luton inside-left missed the target altogether, and a fine chance to equalise the scores went begging.

Evidently the Luton players had made up their minds there was a decent chance of saving the game from the manner they set about their task in the second half, and for quite a long time they were the attacking side, without, however, testing Hughes very severely, for the home backs put up a splendid opposition, and in this particular were superior to the Luton pair, who were rather shaky at close quarters. Bob Hawkes put in a lot of work, and two or three times attempted to bring about an equalising goal off his own bat, as it were by taking pot shots. They were good ones, too, but just failed to bring about the desired effect.

The result hung in the balance at this stage, and a fine stroke of work from Johnson, who tricked Rothwell and centred the ball right along the goal-line, fully deserved to bring about a goal. If it had done so, there is no knowing what might have happened, for right away from the goal kick the Hammers got down, and Harrison put on a second goal to the credit of his side with a fine drive. Probably if the light had been good Naisby might have prevented this, but it was now difficult to follow the flight of the ball at all. Anyhow, coming at this point, and little more than a quarter of an hour to play, Luton were faced with a big task, and they never afterwards had quite the same grip of the game as in the previous half-hour.

Naturally the home officials were now anxious

for the match to finish, and many comments were made on the stand as to whether the referee would allow it to do so. When he got within five minutes of the proper time, it was recognised that he fully intended to play to a finish, and there was nothing for it but defeat for Luton. It is true Shea got a further goal in the dark, but just how it happened very few could tell, and it will be noticed no report goes into detail on the point. Naisby himself would know little about it until the ball hit the back of the net.

The result flattered the home side, who did not deserve such a pronounced victory. Each goal came immediately after a spell of Luton pressure, and caught the defence unawares, the halves not having got into position to repel the sudden attacks. Naisby could not be blamed for either point, while the work of the middle line on the whole was very good, with R. Hawkes the most prominent member of the defensive brigade. Ashton did not make up for the absence of Potts, whose tackling would have been very useful. The experiment forward did not turn out badly in mid-field at all, and Moody did quite as well as could be expected, and as he came through the game without accident, it should give him full confidence for next Saturday. Both Brown and Johnson got some fine centres across, and on the whole Luton were very unlucky in not getting one or two goals from these.

Queen's Park Rangers have at last lost their unbeaten certificate, 25,000 spectators at Park Royal seeing Swindon score as many goals against them as they had yielded in all their previous ten matches. It was a great game, the Railway men eventually running out winners by 3 goals to 1. Watford did uncommonly well on their own ground to beat Coventry by 6 goals to 2. At Southampton, the home team were beaten by Crystal Palace by 4 goals to 2, and at Exeter, Brighton were victorious by 3 goals to 1. The other results were:—Millwall 2, Bristol Rovers 1; New Brompton 1, Stoke 1; Brentford 2, Northampton 2; Reading 4, Leyton 0; Plymouth 3, Norwich 0.