

Southern League.

LUTON v. SOUTHAMPTON.

Played at Luton on Saturday. Result:—

Luton 1 goal.

Southampton 1 goal.

The teams were as follow:—

Luton — Naisby; Wightman and Potts; F. Hawkes, Bushell, and R. Hawkes; Brown, Streeton, Moody, Lashbrooke, and Johnson.

Southampton—Knight; Eastham and Robertson; Kimpton, Denby, and McAlpine; Wilcox, Brown, Hamilton, Gibson, and Handley.

Referee, Mr. W. J. Heath (Burslem).

The match with Southampton had been looked forward to for two reasons—first, because it was to be the occasion of a well-deserved benefit for Fred Hawkes, and secondly, because it was to give Luton an excellent opportunity of securing a second victory at home. Alas, the Fates were not propitious. Two or three hours before the match, heavy rain set in and continued, not only spoiling the game but making the ground in such a state that good football was altogether out of the question. Then Walker and Stansfield were unable to turn out, and with Moody appearing at centre, Luton actually had only one of the regular forwards (Brown) appearing in his usual place.

Considering the conditions under which the game was played, the attendance was better than might have been expected, three or four thousand spectators putting in an appearance. The majority of these found accommodation in the stands, whilst of those on the terraces, as many as could found shelter under umbrellas.

With slush underfoot and rain overhead, the task of the players was not an enviable one, but the men stuck to their work remarkably well, and the game was a pretty fast one all the way through, although the quality of the football was naturally not of the best.

Southampton, in winning the toss, gained some advantage from the wind. The Luton forwards soon got going, and in the first minute of the game the left wing became prominent. Lashbrooke was presented with a fine opportunity as the result of a pass from Moody, but Eastham just managed to run in and rob him. Immediately afterwards, an attack on the right wing was easily cleared. The Saints then broke away, but their effort was rather weak, and Wightman had no difficulty in effecting a clearance. Not to be outdone, however, the Saints were soon round the home goal again, and a good shot from Gibson just sailed over the bar. Another prettily combined effort was neatly spoiled by Fred Hawkes, and, as a result, the home forwards were given an opportunity. This time it was the right wing which made itself felt, but a centre from Brown went begging. A minute or so later, Lashbrooke and Johnson made a well-combined attack, and Eastham only relieved by sending the ball into touch.

The game was fast, considering the nature of the ground, and play never remained long at one end. A good clearance by Robertson once more set the Saints going, and their attack was persistent. A tussle between the forwards and Bushell resulted in the latter being hurt, necessitating his retiring behind the goal, and subsequently he had to go off the field for the rest of the half. It was during his absence that the Saints became especially prominent, and the right wing forced five successive corners, all of which, however, proved fruitless from the point of view of goals.

A weak attempt on the part of the Luton forwards to force the pace met with no success, and the Saints, towards the close of the half, had matters almost as they willed. Their efforts were rewarded about three or four minutes before the whistle sounded for half-time, when Hamilton, tricking Wightman, beat Naisby with a good shot.

The Luton forwards, upon the game being resumed after the interval, were not long in making their presence felt, and a continued attack on the goal resulted. The Saints were lucky in not having the equalising goal scored against them in the first minute of the half, Johnson heading just an inch or two over the bar from a centre by Streeton.

At the other end the Luton goal had an equally lucky escape, but a minute later a mis-kick on the part of Wightman let in Hamilton, who with only Naisby to beat, shot rather hastily, and the ball struck the post and went behind. There would have been little doubt of his scoring had he taken the ball nearer the goal instead of shooting immediately he had beaten Wightman.

About ten minutes after the re-start, Luton had obtained the equaliser, and although the goal was a good one, it nevertheless came as a surprise. Johnson and Lashbrooke on the left wing, playing together well, succeeded in outwitting Eastham, and Lashbrooke sending the ball on to Johnson, the latter helped it on its way towards goal, and it slid off Eastham into the net.

The Saints' attack played with determination after this reverse, and once more the Luton goal had a narrow escape. Denby took a long shot at goal, and Potts, in attempting to return the ball with a volley only partially got in his kick, and the ball was turned towards the Luton goal. It was travelling very fast and a goal seemed certain. Naisby, however, by a great effort, fell upon the ball and eventually succeeded in clearing. Later on Hamilton hit the bar with a long shot.

Towards the close of the game, the Luton for-

wards played remarkably well, and it is surprising that they did not add another goal. The Saints' defence, however, was very sound, and nothing further was scored, though just on time Streeton had hard luck with a nice low drive, which Knight only just prevented entering the far corner of the net.

A draw just about represented the merits of the teams, for whilst Southampton had hard luck with two or three long shots, there were occasions when Luton almost forced the ball into goal. I wonder why it is, by the way, that the Luton forwards are so terribly afraid of shooting! One seldom sees a first-time shot from a Luton forward, and yet on a day like Saturday, and especially in the second half, it was the only policy to pay.

Of course, the Luton attack suffered badly from the absence of Walker and Stansfield. Streeton was certainly not in his element, and Johnson betrayed his old fault of trying to do too much with the ball before parting with it. Lashbrooke also suffers somewhat from the same complaint, and under these circumstances it was not surprising that the Luton forward play did not provide the spectators with many thrills.

The halves were in capital form, and the probability is that Luton were only robbed of victory by Bushell's enforced retirement. Bob Hawkes also got hurt in making one terrific shot for goal, a Southampton player getting his foot to the ball at the same moment, but he was speedily able to resume. Fred Hawkes seemed to play with as much energy as he did ten years ago. Potts was the better of the two backs, Wightman being a trifle uncertain at times, and Naisby gave a very good display in goal.

The visitors played with much more dash than might have been expected, judging from their lowly position on the League table, and Eastham showed that he still knows how to play at back. Knight, who did not have much to do in goal, fumbled the first shot that came his way, but towards the finish he made a brilliant save by fisting out a shot that looked a scorer all the way. The forwards and halves worked very hard, the right wing being particularly prominent, whilst Hamilton at centre-forward was always ready to take a pot-shot.

Owing to some of the clubs being engaged in Cup-ties, there were only four other matches in the Southern League on Saturday, and of these one—Crystal Palace v. Plymouth—had to be stopped ten minutes before time owing to bad light. The Palace were then leading by 3 goals to 1. The only surprise was at Northampton, where Queen's Park Rangers had five goals put up against them and could only respond with one. At Swindon, Millwall were beaten by 4 goals to 1, and at Bristol the Rovers drew with West Ham, each side scoring once.