

LUTON FOOTBALL NOTES.

By "The Goalie."

SOUTHERN LEAGUE.

FRED HAWKES' BENEFIT.

RAIN, MUD, AND DARKNESS.

LUTON'S PLUCKY DISPLAY.

Water, water everywhere. That was the chief impression one got of Saturday's match between Luton and Southampton. The water poured in torrents from the scudding clouds, turned the ground into a slippery, sodden, slimy, treacherous quagmire, drove the spectators into the stands and caused a host of umbrellas to be raised like a bed of black unhealthy mushrooms, drenched the players to the skin, making them the muddiest of muddied oafs, splashed from faulty gutters on all and sundry, and percolated into the Press-box, which, with its splendid view of the field of play is acknowledged by visitors at ordinary times to be one of the best in England, but which on Saturday was as desolate and cold as a ship's crow's-nest on a stormy night. But the worst effect of the weather was the way in which it diminished the attendance, for the match was set apart for the benefit of Fred Hawkes, Luton's popular half-back.

Fred Hawkes belongs to the best type of professional footballer. His consistency is remarkable. He never has a bad day, but, though never showy, is always sound, while never does he give up trying, however hopeless things may seem. Playing to the gallery was never one of his faults, but as a defensive half-back he has few equals. He also knows how to feed the men in front of him, but defence is his strong point, and he seems to have the knack of instinctively knowing when the ball is coming from a centre. His unswerving loyalty to his club, with which he has been associated during the whole course of his professional career has endeared him to the hearts of the spectators, and given decent weather, a "bumper" benefit would have been a certainty. Fred was given his first benefit some time ago in conjunction with Fred White, a South-Eastern League match being set apart. It was real hard luck, therefore, that on the present occasion, when a Southern League fixture was apportioned to him, that the weather should turn out so unfavourable. Even allowing for the fact that both stands were crowded, the attendance could hardly have numbered four thousand, but there is a silver lining in the fact that a large number of tickets were sold while collections and subscriptions will also swell the receipts. At the time of writing there are no definite figures to hand, but these will be found on page 5.

The visitors were Southampton, always a popular side at Luton, and the result was a draw, one goal each. The state of the turf and the weather militated against good class football, of course, but at times the game was fairly fast and interesting. Southampton were the heavier team and were better able to keep their footing, but both sets of players experienced great difficulty in judging the pace of the ball after it bounced, for it slithered along the ground in a most deceptive manner. The first half was almost entirely in favour of the visitors, who fully deserved their lead of one goal at the interval. Luton rallied wonderfully in the second half, and after they had equalised, it would have been small wonder if they had obtained the winning goal during their persistent attack during the closing stages. On the whole, Southampton were the better team, their backs being particularly safe while their forwards showed a better understanding and better shooting abilities than Luton's quintette.

The home team was still far below full strength, and this makes their performance fairly creditable. Potts made a welcome re-appearance as right back, and played a good game too, his kicking, except for one slip, being sure if not vigorous, and he was his old self at tackling. Wightman was rather unsteady, though he did some good things at times, and Naisby was perfectly safe in goal. Bob Hawkes was perhaps the pick of the halves, but they all played well. The only forward who played in his right place was Brown, and he did the little he had to do well. He was partnered by Streeton, who was weak in controlling the ball, and who also neglected his partner too much. Moody again operated at centre, but he was not a great success, failing to hold his forwards together. Lashbrooke was resourceful at inside right, and after a poor opening Johnson performed well at outside left.

Bob Hawkes lost the toss, and Luton were set to face the wind and rain, the Southampton skipper naturally wishing to play with the tide. The home team set up a fairly hot pace to commence with, and Moody nearly got through from a pass by Lashbrooke. After the Saints had cleared a corner, their forwards worked down the field by means of some smart passing, and Brown tested Naisby with a smart drive. Hamilton, too, was well stopped by Potts as he was going through. Returning to the attack, Moody chanced a shot which went wide of the posts. Neither goalkeeper was very much troubled, the forwards being deceived by the pace of the ball on the slippery turf.

Potts stopped Wilcox when the latter was favourably placed, and a dangerous centre from Brown was disposed of by the benefiariere, enabling Streeton to put in a good run, which was spoilt by Johnson shooting wide. The Saints then changed the field of operation by some brilliant combination, and Macalpine gave Naisby a grand drive to save. Meanwhile Wightman had had to retire through an injury, but after receiving attention from Trainer Lawson he was able to resume. Bushell, however, was not so lucky, for, receiving a nasty knock on the ankle, he was unable to return until after the interval. Profiting by these misfortunes to the home team, Southampton kept the ball in the Luton half of the field, and so persistent were they at one point than they gained no less than five corners straight off the reel. The first was headed dangerously near his own goal by Potts, and the others were sent over the line by the other defenders as the safest means of disposing of them. At last the ball was cleared, but the Saints were soon penning Luton in again, and eventually Wightman miskicked, and enabled Hamilton to beat Naisby with a fast ground shot. Southampton came again before the interval, but nothing further of note happened, and the teams changed over with the visitors leading by 1-0.

The second moiety was much more even and early in the game a good centre by Brown gave Johnson a chance with a header. At the other end a slip by Wightman gave Hamilton a clear run, but for some reason or other he shot from long range instead of working in closer, and the ball cannoned off the post out of play. At last Johnson equalised for Luton with a shot that appeared to touch Eastham on its way to the net. This encouraged Luton to further efforts, and for a few minutes the visiting defence had an exceedingly warm time of it. Streeton gave Knight a sharp shot, and then the Saints began to assert themselves again. Luton had an extremely narrow squeak on one occasion when Potts miskicked in trying to clear from Denby, and it was only a convulsive effort by Naisby that prevented the ball passing over the line. Hamilton tried one or two long shots, one of which hit the bar and went over. The visitors also had a narrow escape when their goal was fairly bombarded, but it was too well packed for the Luton forwards to get the ball into the net. During the closing stages, Luton tried hard to get the winning goal, but they were out of luck, and time came with the score:—

LUTON 1, SOUTHAMPTON 1.