

THE CUP COMPETITION.

LUTON v. NOTTS COUNTY.

Played at Luton on Saturday. Result:—

Notts County	4 goals.
Luton	2 goals.

The teams were as follow:—

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

Notts County—Iremonger; Morley and West; Emberton, Clamp, and Craythorne; Flint, Matthews, Cantrell, Richards, and Waterall.

Referee, Mr. C. W. Gillett (Willeeden).

Five years ago Luton entertained Sunderland in the second round of the competition proper for the F.A. Cup, having qualified for the privilege by beating Gainsborough Trinity at the second time of asking, and they succeeded in making a goalless draw with the Wearsiders, but lost by a goal to nil in the replay.

If history had repeated itself on Saturday, when Luton once again had the pleasure of receiving a visit from a First League team, the supporters of the local Club would have been fully satisfied. Unfortunately, the hopes of optimistic people were not realised, and the result of a very good game was that Luton had to acknowledge defeat by 4 goals to 2.

The conditions under which the game was played were not of the best, for though the weather cleared, it was too mild for strenuous football and the ground was in a terribly heavy condition. The state of the pitch was the greater handicap to the local players, the visitors being much the bigger set of men. There were between eight and nine thousand people present when the game was started.

The County won the toss, but did not gain any material advantage. Luton were early prominent, and Brown, after a clever move on the right, forced a corner. The kick was well placed and was received by Bob Hawkes, who, however, was somewhat hampered and shot wide. A few minutes later Stansfield was getting away on the left, but unfortunately the movement was spoiled by hands being given against Bob. This relieved the situation for Notts, and following the kick, their left winger, Waterall, got away, but his attack was neatly frustrated by Wightman, who had no difficulty in holding the winger off the ball. The County were not long in again forcing play into the Luton half, and it was following some clever combination amongst the forwards that Waterall had hard luck with a good shot, the ball just travelling by the post.

At this period the Notts right wing was putting in some good work, and in attempting to spoil one of their moves Potts was injured. Fortunately, he was soon able to resume, after having been attended to by the trainer. The County men continued to maintain their advantage, and for some minutes had matters almost as they would, and it was only on account of the smart work of the defence that they were prevented from scoring. Notts had been pressing for some time when a free kick for offside relieved, and taking full advantage of this, Stansfield got away on the left wing, but he very foolishly fouled the right back, and thus spoiled what appeared to be a promising piece of work. It was shortly after this incident that Luton went as near scoring as they did throughout the half. Play had been in midfield for some minutes when Streeton obtained possession, and finding himself quite clear, immediately made tracks for the Notts goal. The two backs were quickly in pursuit, and the local man's nerve failing him, he shot too soon, and the ball went over the bar. Curiously enough, it was immediately after this that the County scored their goal. From the goal kick the forwards were able to take the ball down towards the Luton goal, where a clever piece of combination was crowned by Cantrell scoring a good, though apparently an easy goal.

Luton went away with a zeal after this reverse, and forced a corner, from which, however, they gained little advantage. Unfortunately, Luton were soon outplayed again, and Wightman was very lucky in saving a certain goal. The County were pressing hard, when the inside-right sent in a good shot. Wightman happened to be standing right in goal and kicked clear. The game was fast, and play did not remain at one end long. Luton again took up the running and forced two corners in quick succession—both from the right wing. For some minutes the home team pressed, and several opportunities came their way, but they seemed to lack ability in turning the openings to account. Then, just before the interval, the County forwards again showed their superiority over the Luton team in taking the ball down the field, their combination being very effective. As a result of this move, Matthews was given an opening, and he scored with a good shot. The County were thus leading by 2 goals to nil when the interval was called.

Upon changing ends, Luton pressed, and Streeton had the misfortune to slip just as he was about to shoot, and the goalkeeper had no difficulty whatever in running out and kicking clear. A few minutes later Brown was getting away nicely on the right wing when he was rather nastily fouled. The resultant free kick was taken by Wightman, who went within an ace of scoring. He shot straight for the goal, and Iremonger, owing to the crowd of players in front of him, did not see the ball until it was close upon him. He then made a dive, and brought off a good save by turning the ball round the post for a corner. The defence, however, was able to cope with the attack consequent upon the corner kick, and the Notts forwards succeeded in transferring play to the Luton half, where they forced a corner, which, however, proved fruitless. Play quickly returned to the Notts' goal-mouth, and Moody had hard luck with a pot-shot, the ball passing an inch or two over the bar. Immediately afterwards Luton forced a corner, from which Fred Hawkes missed by a very narrow margin.

The County men were not long in brightening up, and attacking the Luton goal with some vigour. Wightman nearly scored against his own side. He was about to return a shot at a volley, when the ball twisted off his toe, and Naisby only just managed to prevent the sphere entering the top corner of the net. It was really a very clever save. Notts continued to press, and their efforts were soon rewarded, Waterall eventually scoring with a fine shot. As soon as the ball had been centred, the forwards took it down the field, and Richards scored Notts' fourth and last goal. The point was, however, a soft one, and a good many people thought Naisby should have saved.

After this, the County men seemed inclined to take matters with comparative ease, and Luton playing up better, were not long in reducing the lead, Moody scoring with a fine header from a centre by Brown. The winger worked hard for the point, and is deserving of the highest credit.

Luton's second goal followed soon afterwards. Stansfield ended a run on the wing by sending in a well-judged centre, which was taken by Streeton, who sent in a header. Iremonger only partially saved, and the ball twisted out of his hands and struck the bar. He immediately turned round and caught the ball, apparently from over the line, and the referee at once blew his whistle and pointed to the centre of the field, adhering resolutely to his decision, despite the appeal of the Notts players. No other incident of note occurred, and the match, as stated, ended in a win for the County by 4 goals to 2.

Taking the game all through, Luton did quite as much, and probably more, aggressive work than their adversaries, and yet the Nottingham team always gave one the impression of being a considerably stronger combination. Their methods were as far removed from those associated with Cup-ties as possible, as they were coolness itself, and all their movements were carried out without the slightest suggestion of undue haste.

Their defence was in striking contrast to that of Luton, for while Wightman and Potts relied simply upon dash, Morley and West depended upon their ability in tackling, never being flurried, but always seeming to get in the way of the ball. The Luton backs played a very good game, but they were eclipsed by men of greater ability.

So well did Morley and West play that Iremonger was not often troubled, and it appeared to be fortunate for the visitors that he was not, seeing that the form he displayed was far from convincing. Naisby, generally speaking, was much smarter in his movements, but a good many people thought he ought to have prevented the last two goals being scored. They both resulted from shots taken at fairly long range and almost from exactly the same spot, but it is just possible that other players in the way may have obstructed Naisby's view.

The Luton goal-keeper certainly seemed to make no great effort to get at the ball, and that leads one to the supposition that he did not get a sight of it until too late. At half-back, the visitors were extremely well served, but all the same for that, there was not a better man on the field than Bob Hawkes. The amount of work the Luton captain put in naturally told upon him in the later stages of the game, but on the whole he gave a wonderfully good exhibition.

Fred Hawkes was as usual in excellent form, but I did not think Bushell was quite at his best. Forward, the County played in a most methodical way, never appearing to over-exert themselves, and combining one with the other as coolly and cleverly as if they were playing an exhibition game. They were a well-balanced lot, and were capable, I fancy, of even better things than we saw.

The Luton quintette worked with the greatest enthusiasm, and no particular fault can be found with them. What they missed most was an experienced centre-forward. Streeton is a smart player, and may possibly do great things, but he was overweighted. The task set him was too great. Had he been cool enough to take advantage of the opening unexpectedly afforded him early in the game, it is quite on the cards that a different result might have been recorded.

That, however, is merely speculative. What was actually proved was that whilst Luton played very creditably indeed, they were up against a considerably stronger team. With the element of luck which notoriously waits upon Cup-ties, there was, of course, a chance that Luton might bring off a victory, but in the ordinary way Notts County would beat Luton almost every time.

The gate on Saturday was considerably less than that of five years ago, when Sunderland were the visitors. Then there were 10,500 spectators, and the gate receipts amounted to £571. On that occasion, it will be remembered, Luton made a goalless draw, and in the replay at Sunderland, when they were beaten by a goal to nil, the gate, a sixpenny one, realised £540, there being 23,000 spectators. On Saturday there were only 8,200 people present and the receipts amounted to £443. Thus Luton lost £100 by playing at home, as they were offered £300 to go to Nottingham.

The "Nottingham Daily Express," in its comments on the match, says: "Luton were an unfinished lot of plodders; nothing more than that. The age and adolescence of the side will not blend into a working agreement, as it were, and they play crude and hysterical football. Naisby 'kept' well, despite the loss of four goals; but the backs were moderate, and only Bob Hawkes was of much class in the half-back line. He played a really fine game in defence, and also put in some artistic touches which made openings for the forwards. The attack, however, lacked finish and weight, and the score flattered them. If Notts had not taken such a long lead, it is most unlikely that their victims would have been granted even a solitary crumb of comfort. The gate was £443 13s. 6d.—a capital sum for a comparatively small town like Luton."

The biggest gate in the Cup-ties on Saturday was at Stamford Bridge, where there were 34,400 spectators, and total takings £1,167. At Watford, where the home team made a draw with Wolverhampton Wanderers, there were 7,500 spectators, and the receipts amounted to £302. The smallest gate was at Southport, where Reading beat Southport Central the takings totalling only £174.

The Southern teams did not fare too well in Saturday's Cup-ties. Chelsea beat Sheffield United by a goal to nil, and Fulham got the better of Burnley to the extent of 2 goals to 1, whilst Croydon Common drew with Leicester Fosse at 2 goals all. Woolwich Arsenal, however, failed at Bolton, where the Wanderers beat them by a goal to nil. Tottenham Hotspur were beaten at West Bromwich by 3 goals to nil, and Clapton Orient suffered defeat on their own ground, where Everton gained the verdict by 2 goals to 1.

Of the Southern League teams, Swindon beat Sutton Junction by 5 goals to nil, Reading were victorious at Southport by 2 goals to nil, Coventry City won at Southampton by a similar score, Northampton beat Bristol City by a goal to nil, and West Ham succeeded against Gainsborough by 2 goals to 1. Brentford and Crystal Palace made a goalless draw, and similar results were returned at Watford, where Wolverhampton Wanderers were the visitors, and at Park Royal, where the Rangers entertained Bradford City. Brighton were beaten at Darlington by 2 goals to 1, Millwall at Bury by 2 goals to 1, Plymouth at Sunderland by 3 goals to 1, Leyton at Liverpool by a goal to nil, and Norwich City at Blackburn by 4 goals to 1, whilst Bristol Rovers went under on their own ground to Portsmouth, who were victorious by 2 goals to 1.