

LUTON'S NEW CENTRE.

**Assists to score First Home Win
for two months.**

West Ham Beaten by a Brilliant Burst

Comments by "Vigilant"

"Needs must when the devil drives"! For months past the supporters of Luton Town have been calling out loudly for a strengthening of the forward line, and their calls fell upon deaf ears until just recently, but with injuries making considerable inroads on a playing strength that was never very formidable, and the prospects of relegation becoming rather too threatening to be viewed with unconcern, the Directors have in the end been driven to desperate remedies. Under the League rules now in force, Saturday was the last day on which clubs could secure the transfer of professional players, except under special circumstances, and through the medium of a process involving a considerable amount of trouble, and so during the last week or so Mr. Secretary Green has been on the hunt after new players. He had two particular objectives in view, but in both cases difficulties presented themselves through more than one club having a share of claim on the players concerned, and in the end the Luton Secretary had to rest content with one of them.

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The one consolation to be derived from this is that the player who has been secured certainly meets in one respect Luton's greatest want, in that he is a centre-forward. His name is George Walden, and he appears to be quite on the young side. So far as I can gather, his age seems to be 22, and he is of good height and strongly built—indeed, one may very fairly describe him as physically fitted for the position of centre-forward. He hails from Poplar, and some few years ago, I believe, Millwall found him in East End football and played him for some time in their Reserve team. Since then he has been in the North and Midlands. From the first published accounts of his capture, it appeared as though he had been secured from Hull City, but this is not quite the case, for it is two seasons ago since he was at Hull. While with Hull, Walden played in several games for the first team in the Second Division of the League, but during the last seasons he has been engaged in the Midland League. Last season he played for Rotherham Town, and this season he has played for Denaby United, but left them some six weeks ago.

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It was some days ago that Luton secured his professional transfer from Denaby, and obtained his signature to a professional form, but a hitch occurred in the transfer, because of the fact that Southend United had previously obtained the player's League transfer from Hull City. As a matter of fact, Southend announced his acquisition more than a week ago, but the League transfer they held was of no use, while Luton held the other transfer, and so, in the end, Southend had to give way, and Luton secured the player. Had they failed to do so, the Luton club would have been in a sorry plight for Saturday's match with West Ham, for with no fewer than six forwards on the injured list, in Johnson, Stansfield, Walker, Stephenson, Shepherd and Lashbrooke, it required some amount of ingenuity to fix up a forward line. As it was, they were only able to get Walden registered in the nick of time to be able to utilise him on Saturday, and even then, with Max Read, the Kettering amateur, unable to assist, Stephenson had to be brought into the team, in spite of the fact that his fractured cheek bone was still very tender and painful. Walker had not recovered from his breakdown at the Palace, and so Streeton was played at inside right.

West Ham have also had a good deal of trouble with injuries, and, like Luton, they played a new forward in Dawson, an outside left, whose transfer from Croydon Common was announced only the previous day. Fairman was able to return to his position at back, and as captain of the team after a month's absence, and in other respects the team was at what now may be regarded as full strength, for all the old first team halves have been incapacitated.

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Mr. A. E. Farrant, of Bristol, was in charge of the game, and the full list of players under his control is appended:—

Luton.—Naisby; Wightman, Potts; F. Hawkes, Bushell, R. Hawkes; Brown, Streeton, Walden, Moody, Stephenson.

West Ham.—Hughes; Fairman, Glover; Redward, Woodards, Blackburn; Ashton, Shea, Harrison, Butcher, Dawson.

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A beautifully fine afternoon and the announcement of a new centre-forward attracted a crowd of between five and six thousand spectators, and for the first time for two months they had the satisfaction of seeing the Blues win a match at home. It was only the fourth League victory the Blues have registered on the Town Ground this season, and there was a wealth of meaning in the remark a Press colleague made as the whistle went for the last time that he had quite forgotten how to write up a game of which Luton were the winners! In point of fact, there was not much in the game to write up. About the only consolation it furnished was that it brought to Luton two badly-needed points. It is, perhaps, just as well to refrain from arguing too closely as to whether they deserved them, for it cannot be denied that the Blues gave anything but a brilliant display. Until the Blues actually did equalise, they hardly ever gave one the impression that they would manage it, and even when they took the lead in a brilliant moment, their ability to hold it was so doubtful that a sigh of relief could almost be heard as the teams were whistled off.

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The first half was as tame an affair as one could imagine, and especially so for the home supporters. The new centre was almost completely left out in the cold by his colleagues, and did not have half-a-dozen passes during the half, while of the other forwards Stephenson was the only one to do anything at all striking. The halves, too, were right off colour. Bob Hawkes, in particular, gave one the impression of being tired out, and was but a shadow of his usual self. The backs were the redeeming feature. They could be excused being a trifle wild at times, considering the frequency they had to meet attacks which were always full of life and movement.

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The West Ham forwards were altogether faster, nippier, and smarter to seize upon openings, than the Luton front line, and it was because of this that they opened the scoring sixteen minutes from the start. It was only the third time they had got anywhere near Naisby, and there was no hesitancy in utilising the chance. Shea tricked both Stephenson and Bob Hawkes, and pushed the ball through to Harrison, who let fly with a rising shot, which took a different direction to what Naisby was apparently expecting, and entered the net high up. Prior to this, Luton had had nearly all the play, and, though for five minutes the Hammers were very lively, the Blues then regained the advantage in the balance of exchanges. But there was always wanting in their attack a vim which the businesslike visitors displayed, and throughout the Hammers were the more dangerous near goal. Naisby had some very ticklish running out to do to save his goal, and once the Blues were a little fortunate not to have a penalty award given against them.

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Luton netted the ball after thirty-five minutes, but the point was not allowed to count. Bob Hawkes hooked a badly placed corner kick in among the crowd of players in the goal mouth. Moody helped on the ball with his head, and Streeton went into the net with it, but was ruled offside. Streeton ought to have scored a legitimate equaliser three minutes before the change of ends, for a fine centre came to him so nicely from Stephenson that a goal seemed an absolute gift. But instead of the quiet touch it wanted, Streeton blazed away and crossed the ball somewhere in the direction of the corner flag. This was only one of a number of fine centres that had come from Stephenson, but they all came to naught, and really one had reason to feel satisfied that the half-time score was no worse than

Luton 0, West Ham 1.

The Blues seemed altogether a different team when they came out again. For ten minutes they peppered at the West Ham goal, hard and persistently, giving Hughes the chance to accomplish some really fine work. The custodian brought off two magnificent saves from Brown and Streeton, but an effort of Moody's was too much for him. It was a grand goal, headed with characteristic judgment by Moody, but not a little of the credit must go to Brown, who persevered after looking to be well beaten, and slipping by put across a centre which fell beautifully for the inside left. Luton's brilliance did not end here, for five minutes later quite a clever piece of work gave them the lead. Bushell and Bob Hawkes led the way, and from Bob's pass the new centre, finding his passage to goal barred, neatly turned the ball to Moody, who was quite clear. One of the backs essayed a trip, but Bert eluded it, and crashed the ball high up in the net. Walden's share in the goal was quite the best thing he did in the match, and he was so delighted at its success that he simply hugged Moody with unrestrained glee!

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For some minutes we saw the Luton of old, vigorous attacks following one upon the other in quick succession. The front line were in deadly earnest now, and Stephenson and Bushell would both have met with their reward if they had added to the lead, while Brown did several clever things. But this form was not long sustained, and for quite twenty minutes it was a case of touch and go as to whether the Hammers drew level. Their new outside left proved a "goer" of the first order, and Shea and Co. were a very earnest, deadly lot near goal. Naisby twice had to come out and save from Shea, and once he could only just flick over the bar a magnificent effort by Butcher, which swung in at hurricane pace from the left.

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The referee once very nearly gave the Hammers an equaliser, for Naisby was so "tucked up" in coming out that he had to attempt a kick away with the ball on the ground. The ball hit the referee plump and fell at the feet of a West Ham forward. It was quite impossible for Tommy to get back, and it would have been rank bad luck if the Luton colours had been lowered in such a way, but fortunately the Blues' stock man for emergencies, Fred Hawkes, did not fail them, and a harmless "by" was the only result. Towards the close one could feel a little more comfortable, for the home forwards got going again, and put in a lot of good work. Stephenson was once very unlucky to be hauled up from behind when he seemed almost a certain scorer, and Bob Hawkes was equally unlucky not to do the trick with the free kick. Hughes turned it over the bar in fine style for a corner, and he also saved grandly from Streeton, after falling in, taking a sterling shot from Streeton, and so the end came with the score:—

LUTON 2, WEST HAM 1.