

Southern League.

SOUTHAMPTON v. LUTON.

Played at Southampton on Saturday. Result:—

Southampton	3 goals.
Luton	2 goals.

The teams were as follow:—

Luton—Naisby; Wightman and Potts; F. Hawkes, H. Clarke, and R. M. Hawkes; Brown, Streecon, Walden, Moody, and Stephenson.

Southampton — Knight; Eastham and Ireland; Denby, Lee, and McAlpine; Kimpton, Small, E. C. Christmas, Prince, and Blake.

Referee, Mr. C. R. Hall (Birmingham).

Luton made one compulsory change owing to Bushell's injury at Stoke, and H. Clarke, of the Reserves, was given the centre-half position, and incidentally made his initial appearance in the Southern League. The Saints have been very disappointing this season, and made some drastic changes. It was given out that the whole of the first team forwards were dropped, but this was hardly correct, for two of the line played the previous Saturday against Crystal Palace, and both wingers have been more or less regular members of the Southern League side. They also had a forced change in the defence, as Robertson was unable to turn out at left back, Ireland taking his place. Southampton has never properly supported the Club for ordinary fixtures, and the directors have in years past had to depend on a big run in the F.A. Cup to pull them round, so that the gate of 5,000 was quite up to the standard, particularly when it is taken into account that it had been raining all the morning. Several weeks ago the players had been compelled to accept reduced wages, or the Club would have gone under. It has been stated the expenses of the present team are heavier than any previous side which has worn the Saints' colours, and from information gathered on Saturday, the weekly wage bill is almost 50 per cent. higher than that of Luton, so it is not due to economy that the utter lack of success can be attributed.

The pitch, which lies very low, was thoroughly soaked, the water actually standing in pools along the touch-lines. The Saints opened the game in bustling style, and every advance they made was received with encouraging cheers by the local spectators, who were naturally anxious to give confidence to the experimental side. The first shot of the match was put in by Small, but Potts charged this down. The ball was, however, quickly brought back by Kimpton, who slung across a fine centre, which Blake almost turned through with his head, but just failed to reach the target, the ball going outside the upright and hitting the side net.

Brown was the first Lutonian to get off with the ball, and he sprinted into the home quarters in most promising style, until Ireland met him, and by a clever tackle managed to block his passage for the moment, only to get the ball quickly returned to the middle of the field, and but for the smartness of Lee, this movement would have brought along a goal. Still, on the whole, the Saints were mostly the attacking party for the first ten minutes of the game, and Small headed over a neat pass from Blake. At the opposite end, whenever Luton brought the ball within the danger zone, Knight, with great daring, came out to meet the onslaught, and although he took risks, he had the satisfaction of beating off the danger, although it is fairly certain that if one or two of the opportunities had been taken advantage of, he would have been freely blamed, and at least on one occasion it was more a case of luck than good judgment that saved his charge, for he completely lost the ball when he was fully thirty yards away from his goal.

A corner kick taken by Luton was well placed, but Knight punched the ball away, and the return shot went wide. By this time the exchanges were fairly even in character, but it fell to the Saints to open the score. They have, however, to thank a thoroughly bad decision of the referee for their good fortune. Prince, who netted the ball, was quite half a-dozen yards offside. It is stated that the official thought the ball touched a Luton player, but from a good position to see everything that occurred, I have no hesitation in stating that the ball came direct from a Southampton player to Prince, and was never touched by any Luton player in transit. Kimpton was proving a source of considerable trouble, and but for his efforts the Saints would have cut a sorry figure. He was continually earning applause for his dashing bursts down the touch-line, and twice in quick succession he finished up with capital shots, Naisby saving one and the other flashing past the further upright. Curiously, it was the Luton right wing which gave the home defence chief anxiety, and Brown was showing a clean pair of heels to Ireland very frequently. One of these sprints brought about the equalising goal, for the ball was slung right over to the left, and Moody appeared to have a decent chance to get in a shot, but he just missed the ball, and it went to Stephenson, who netted with a good cross attempt. It was argued by the home supporters that this goal also was scored from an offside position, and in a measure this was true, for at the moment of receiving the ball, Stephenson was well in front of his comrades and beyond the back, but when Brown centred, the left-winger was behind the ball, and only got into position by running several yards. The majority of the spectators evidently thought Moody touched the ball, and if he had done so, probably Stephenson would have been offside, for he seemed to be outpacing his inside partner whilst on the run. Anyway, matters were now equal, and with Luton showing the better form, it appeared only a question as to how soon they would take the lead, but up to the interval nothing tangible resulted. Eastham and Knight were the chief cause of this, their work being really fine under heavy pressure.

The game had a sensational restart. Within a minute Luton obtained the lead for which they had striven so hard in the first half; and such a simple goal it was. Stephenson got clean away from the kick-off and squared the ball within a yard or so of Knight, but just far enough away to prevent him reaching it as it flashed across the goal-mouth. It seemed certain that one or other of the inside forwards would trap it and have a shot, but all three missed the leather, and it travelled over to Brown, who promptly returned it into the goal-mouth, and Walden had but to touch through. Three Southampton men were almost as near the ball as Walden, and if either of them had but put out his foot, probably Walden would not have scored, but no player made an effort, and the ball, which only just rolled over the line, was savagely kicked down the field to restart the game. It was a comical sight for a Lutonian to see the manner in which the Southampton defenders looked at each other when they found it was actually a goal. Everything seemed plain sailing for Luton now, as with a goal lead they appeared to have the game well in hand. There was no comparison between the two lines of forwards, and but for the work put in by the Saints' wingers, there was little or no anxiety given the Luton defence. The crowd scarcely appreciated the way Wightman bowled over the Saints' left wing, and were inclined to be

demonstrative. Indeed, the referee had to caution the crowd at the back of the Luton goal for their behaviour after Naisby had been hurt in a melee, Wightman complaining that a stone was thrown at him when he went to the assistance of his comrade.

The Saints secured their second point from a corner kick, although the ball passed and repassed across the goal before Prince headed it through, without Naisby being able to get to it. On the run of the game Luton should still have been leading, but they were now faced with the task of getting another goal to be in that position, and it looked a certainty when Brown dropped one of his centres well into the goal area. Both Moody and Stephenson had worked into the centre, and although Moody failed to gather the ball, it did not appear to be very material, for Stephenson was even better placed, and when he got his foot to the sphere and took aim, everyone present was fully prepared to see it land in the net. But he got just a shade too far under the ball, and it passed a yard over the bar, to the delight of the local supporters, who had made certain of a goal coming. It was indeed a let-off, for as it wanted only some twelve minutes to time, it would probably have brought full points, and incidentally have placed Luton in a comparatively safe position on the table.

But even worse was to come, for a rush down the field five minutes from time gave Kimpton an opportunity. He just managed to keep the ball in play, and placed in the middle of the field, and after two or three players on each side had had a kick at it without getting it under control, the leather travelled out to Blake, who, with a screw shot, managed to get the ball into the net off the far post. It was a very lucky point, particularly from the position in which Blake was standing, but nevertheless valuable, for it lifted a load of anxiety from the Saints' officials after everything seemed hopeless for them, for it was almost impossible to expect Luton to get in front again, with the home players content to waste time and ready to take advantage of any and every method of keeping out the Luton forwards. But it is quite probable a division of points would have come about but for another blunder on the part of the whistle-holder, for Streeton was in a splendid position for scoring when he was pulled up for offside just before the finish. The ruling was received with laughter by the crowd, who were now in a shouting mood and on quite good terms with themselves and the players; and well they might, seeing this was Southampton's first win for three months.

On Saturday's form, the result notwithstanding, Southampton are not the team they were when they visited Luton some four months ago, and Luton should still be higher than the Saints on the final table. They cannot expect to experience such luck in future matches, especially if the same forwards are chosen, and it is understood they will be, seeing this match was won. In Kimpton, however, they possess a dangerous winger, and Blake is up to Southern League average standard, but the inside men gave little evidence of ability, and but for the feeding of a strong half-back division, would be little seen. Lee is still a power, and his work on Saturday was extremely fine; indeed, he was the outstanding player of the match, and but for his efforts it would have been a sorry day for the Saints. Eastham was the better back, and as Knight was on the winning side he will be given credit for a good display, although he was very risky in his methods, and was lucky in not suffering for this.

The Luton forwards certainly did not score sufficient goals to win the match, but it will not often happen that five goals in two away matches will fail to land some points, and seeing that the line as constituted on Saturday has netted seven goals from Saturday to Saturday, it should be given further opportunities. Waiden, if not clever, opens out the game, and with another week's training should develop pace. Streeton appears better suited at inside right than centre, and is settling down with his partner in good style; indeed, they were the best wing on the field at Southampton. It was trying Clarke rather high, and although of course he lacks experience, he was really clever with his head, and did not let his side down at all. The backs and goalkeeper were very unlucky in having three goals netted against them, for they tackled on the whole in good style, and their only failing was in not booting the ball in the closing stages when the Saints got into Luton territory.

Luton are still above Southampton, by reason of a slightly superior goal average, but the Saints have a game in hand. Leyton lost at Watford, by the odd goal in five, but they showed very good form and had a full share of the play. New Brompton, playing at home, drew with Coventry City, each side scoring three goals. Brentford, at home, drew with Brighton at one goal all, and are now only a point above Luton, but have two games in hand, and Exeter City, who drew with Stoke at one goal all on the City's ground, are two points above Luton, having 24 points for 31 games.