

VICTORY AT HOME.

The opening match of the season at home, on Monday evening, afforded Luton every cause for satisfaction, because in spite of very threatening clouds in the neighbourhood there was an attendance of nearly 3,000, representing a gate of about £75, and the team secured a result the like of which was missing all through last season. The fact that our forwards showed aptitude for goal scoring was as gratifying as the fact that the defence managed to keep a clean sheet, the more so as this certainly did not appear likely to be the case early in the game. Starting against the wind, the Blues were laboriously slow in getting together and showing the slightest signs of promise, whereas the Southend men seemed to find nothing to worry about in the lively ground, the lively ball, and the still more lively wind. They controlled the ball admirably, they passed accurately and smartly, and their understanding was good. The first quarter of an hour made one feel sorry for Luton, but this feeling soon wore off when the Blues did get going.

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Worth was the hero of the change which swept over the game, although it must also be said that the attack on the whole possessed any amount of virility. Smith had already missed a couple of very useful chances when, with eighteen minutes gone, Worth steered his way through and centred so nicely that the centre-forward was able to retrieve his earlier shortcomings. The feat was repeated within a couple of minutes, and this was all the more creditable to the outside left, because the position he was forced into seemed one from which it was impossible to do anything that would be serviceable to the side. Cheered as he must have been by the merited plaudits of the crowd, Worth continued to do clever things all through the half, and it was only poetic justice that he should also get amongst the scorers. It wanted ten minutes to half-time when Murphy, straying across to the right, sent a shot meant for goal right across, and a miskick by the back gave Worth a chance he was only too ready to accept.

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The interval score was 3—0, and though Southend again made the better start after the resumption, it was Luton who eventually made the most of the running. The standard of play, however, fell off considerably. While the first half was really sparkling, the second half lagged, and the amount of feeling imported by some of the players into the game did not tend to improve matters. Luton were on top nearly the whole time, and there was a fair amount of incident round the Southend goal, but there was no further scoring until about five minutes from the finish, when, in the scramble that followed on a corner forced and taken by Worth, Thompson seized upon the ball and somehow managed to steer it clear of the crowd of players in the goal-mouth.

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Luton's display was certainly encouraging, though here and there improvements could be desired. Day did not have a severe trial, but he must have satisfied everyone with the way he shaped at the little he had to do. Potts does not seem to strike his old form as yet, and the brunt of the work fell upon Henderson, who brought no little experience—and weight—to bear upon his work, and was the means of setting a stamp of back play which ought to prove very effective. At half, the homesters were wonderfully well served, Thompson's hustling style proving altogether disconcerting to the opposition. Worth, as has already been said, was easily the star of the front line, but Wileman was also exceedingly smart, and with Stephenson formed quite a dashing wing. Smith's usefulness in other directions was marred by the time he takes to get himself and his colleagues into action, and Murphy was clean off colour. He is, without doubt, a clever footballer, but the persistency with which he hangs behind the front line will take some getting used to before its advantages will be appreciated.

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Southend had got rather more bulk about them than Luton, and it struck one that they seemed rather imbued with the idea that brute force is the one essential for success in the class of football in which they are engaged. There was a lot too much of it on Monday, and it would not have been surprising if the season had started with a few serious injuries. Their team consisted of Clarke, from Cwm Albion; Thompson, the captain, and Spencer from Tyne, a capital pair of backs; Emery, Moon from Rochdale, and Arnold; Wilson, Wileman, Frost, J. Chapman, and Holden from Plymouth Argyle. Stott, the new centre from Brighton, was unfit to appear, and it let in Frost, an old Southender, who has returned to the club. The right wing were the pick of the attack. Wilson was particularly smart, and the Luton inside right's namesake played dashing football and shot well.