

SOUTHERN LEAGUE.

LUTON'S TERRIFIC STRUGGLE WITH SOUTHEND.

GOALS GALORE IN DING-DONG GAME.

STRAWPLAITERS' UPHILL FIGHT AND VICTORY.

Sound, sound the clarion, fill the fife,
To all the sensual world proclaim,
One crowded hour of glorious life
Is worth an age without a name.

These lines written by Sir Walter Scott occurred to me as I sat in the Press-box on Saturday afternoon, and witnessed a game which will be the talk of local football enthusiasts for weeks to come. The circumstances had led people to expect a good hard-fought match, for Southend United had not been defeated in the Southern League tourney and were dangerous rivals for promotion, but nothing like the terrific struggle which ensued was anticipated. As a matter of fact for only about twenty minutes did the game descend to the commonplace, and for the rest of the time there was witnessed the strenuous efforts of a sound defence trying to cope with the determined attacks of a brilliant line of forwards. The result was a victory for Luton by 4-3, and although they did a little more attacking than the visitors, they could not have grumbled if the latter had taken home a point, in spite of the fact that two of the visitors' goals were presented to them.

The two teams were splendidly matched and first one then the other had the lead. Southend were rather luckily a goal up in the first three minutes, but Luton were undismayed, and before twenty minutes had passed, two penalty kicks successfully taken by Thompson had entirely altered the aspect of the game. Just before the interval, however, the visitors equalised, and when, soon after the re-start they obtained the lead, things began to look rather desperate. Luton were now playing at their best, however, and two fine goals by Stephenson turned defeat into victory. One can commiserate with Southend, for they made a most gallant fight, and it was not until the final whistle went that the points were safe. The game was witnessed by about six thousand spectators, six hundred of whom came from Southend.

One member of the Luton team who will long remember the game is Fred Hawkes. It was a surprise to everyone when this usually safe player placed the ball into his own net two minutes from the start, but when he repeated the performance soon after the restart, the spectators wondered whether they were dreaming. It is only fair to Fred, however, to state that on the second occasion the ball would have gone into the net without his assistance at all, and as he was placed, it would have been difficult for him to have done anything else. The first slip was unquestionably a bad one, but he made up for it in the second half by putting in the spade work which led up to Luton's equalising goal in the second half. Every member of both teams played splendidly. Both goalkeepers had little chance of saving the seven successful shots, the backs kicked hard and accurately, the halves tackled and passed with excellent judgment, and the forwards showed both dash and skill in everything they did. It would be unfair under the circumstances to mention anyone as an outstanding figure, as almost everyone on the field had his brilliant moments.

The start was sensational. Luton won the toss and at once got going, and Bob Hawkes sent just over from a capital centre by Wileman. Southend at once changed the venue and disaster overtook Luton. Henderson tried to head away a centre from Emery, but he missed the ball, and in trying to cover the mistake, Fred Hawkes headed into his own goal. A minute later, Curry tricked Fred Hawkes and sent in an awkward rising shot which Abbott cleverly turned over for a corner. The pace was simply terrific, and Luton rapidly became the aggressors, only to have the ball ballooned over the goal. Luton kept the attack up splendidly, and nearly scored from a shot by Worth which caused Kebbell to concede a corner. In trying to clear, the visitors' right back handled and Thompson scored from the penalty amidst terrific cheering. After Abbott had cleared a dangerous situation by running out, Bob Hawkes had the hardest luck imaginable from a centre by Worth, and immediately afterwards he was fouled by Moon just inside the penalty area, and with his second successful shot, Thompson put Luton ahead.

The excitement was now intense, and with the Luton backs doing great things, Southend were well held for a time. They were soon let in by a free-kick, however, and Abbott made a sensational save from a close shot by Curry. Midfield work followed, but some brilliant work by Streeton and Worth put Wileman in a favourable position, but he could not control the ball and sent just wide. The pace was not so fast as at first, but this was only natural, as it was too hot for any two teams to keep up. As things were so quiet, it came as quite a surprise when Southend equalised. Wilson dodged Thompson and Potts, and sent across a brilliant centre, which Parke headed in from close range. This was easily the best goal of the match and was loudly cheered by Southend's "gallant six hundred." About three minutes later half-time came with the scores two-all.

Luton opened the second half with a couple of corners which came to nought, though keeping up the attack Stephenson made a good attempt which went just wide. After this incidents were few and far between for some time, until Streeton took a sudden pot at goal which passed an inch or two over the bar. This was quickly followed by a hot attack by Southend, and Frost put in a cross shot which beat Abbott. Just as the ball was crossing the line Fred Hawkes dashed up and tried to clear but to Luton's dismay he again sent the ball into his own net, and put Southend one up. This did not last long, however, for two minutes later Stephenson dashed through and completed some splendid work on the part of Fred Hawkes by driving the ball into the net with such pace that it passed between the goalkeeper's legs.

This seemed to arouse Southend to further efforts, and for a time the Luton defence had a hot time of it. Abbott played a very safe game, however, and when the home team succeeded in changing the venue, Fred Hawkes sent in a shot which went a foot the wrong side of the post. Still Luton pegged away, but when Worth put in one of his brilliant cross-drives, Kebbell made a magnificent save. Wilson placed the corner in front of goal, and Streeton hit the cross-bar with a good attempt. As the ball fell, the goalkeeper caught it and cleared. A free-kick close to the penalty line threatened danger, and Bob Hawkes sent the ball out to Worth, who caused the goalkeeper to concede a corner. This was well placed by the winger, and Stephenson headed a fine goal. Bob Hawkes immediately had the hardest of luck, a shot being stopped on the line by one of the backs. Both teams made strenuous efforts towards the close, corners being awarded in quick succession. Luton packed their goal when Southend threatened danger, a wise precaution, especially as the light was failing, and a great cheer went up when eventually the whistle went with the score:—

LUTON 4, SOUTHEND 3.