

SOUTHEND UNITED v. LUTON.

Played at Southend on Saturday. Result :—

Luton 1 goal.

Southend United 1 goal.

* * *

The teams were as follow :—

Luton—H. Bateman; Jarvie and Potts; F. Hawkes, Wilson, and R. Hawkes; Stephenson, Stephenson, Wileman, Smith, Holland, and Worth.

Southend—Kibbell; Thomson and Spencer; Emery, Moon, and Axcell; Wilson, Wileman, Mason, Bradshaw, and Parke.

Referee, Lieut. W. C. Clover (Leicester).

* * *

The game at Southend on Saturday was looked upon as a critical one for both clubs, as a defeat would undoubtedly have put either club out of the running for promotion. As it turned out a draw, there is still a chance for both, but it has brought Swansea and Croydon into the contest for second place, for it would appear nothing can keep Cardiff out now. The Luton directors were very busy all the week in their endeavours to strengthen certain weak spots, and the announcement on Saturday morning that two new players would be turning out created no surprise. Both of the newcomers hail from Tottenham, and, curiously enough, Southend had also been fishing in the same waters, for their centre on Saturday proved to be Mason from the same club. Probably the most useful capture of the three will be Jarvie, for he is quite a young player, this being his first season as a professional. The Spurs obtained him from one of the Scotch junior clubs called Maryhill, but he has had little opportunity at White Hart-lane, and will get a much better chance to make a name with Luton. The new forward is Holland, who was well spoken of as a schoolboy player in the Edmonton district, and has played for the Spurs' South-Eastern League team fairly regularly for a season and a half. He did not play at Luton last season, as on that day the Spurs played a couple of S.E.L. matches, and he was kept at home for the game v. Peterborough City.

* * *

The Supporters' Club excursion was better patronised than was thought probable at one time; doubtless the curiosity with regard to the new players helped to swell the numbers. As a matter of fact, over 700 made the journey, and they were very much in evidence, both in the town and on the ground. The previous week a record Saturday crowd for Southend assembled at Roots Hall, the takings being £157, and it was thought this would be exceeded, seeing that Luton brought at least 500 more supporters than did Cardiff, but this did not turn out to be the fact, and it was stated the takings were £142.

* * *

Luton won the toss, and naturally chose to kick down the slope, as this also gave them the advantage of a stiff breeze. Bradshaw was the first attacking player who came into prominence, but Jarvie soon proved that he was out to stop all such danger, and by a smart tackle forced the Southend manager to kick behind. Bateman, however, was called upon a minute later to stop a long shot, which he caught but dropped, and Mason taking the rebound, headed the ball well in once more, but Bateman was on guard and cleared the danger in good style. A slip by Potts

let in Wilson, but again Bateman was equal to the emergency, and fisted away in great style. Eventually offside against one of the Southend forwards relieved the pressure, and Luton took up the running for some time.

Holland getting a pass from the opposite wing, tried a cross drive which Kibbell just managed to catch, although the attempt was quite a good one. In one very promising left-wing raid Worth got a nasty kick on the ankle, and the game was stopped for Lawson to come on the field. Billy "operated" on the injured limb, but it was evident it was rather a bad injury, and when the game re-started Worth retired to the touch-line for further attention, although he eventually returned to the fray. Stephenson soon afterwards got the better of a tussle with Spencer and shot in first time, but did not quite do the trick; it was, however, a good effort. A fine hook shot by Worth was just caught by Kibbell and cleared, and at this stage Luton were decidedly the better side, but could not quite manage to find Kibbell's weak spot. It was only occasionally that the home forwards were dangerous; indeed, it was only a slip on the part of Jarvie, who let in Mason, that caused Bateman any anxiety for quite a quarter of an hour. But this almost led up to a goal, for Wileman should have made certain of the chance, but, amid the cheers of the Lutonians, he made a bad miss.

At the opposite end of the field, however, Luton were having hard lines once or twice, particularly when Smith headed in from close range, only to find Kibbell just in the right spot to catch the ball. But an even nearer thing arose from a sharp drive by Stephenson, the goalkeeper just tipping the ball over for a corner kick, and the flag kick was finally headed over by Wileman. Just on half-time, however, the Luton goal was seriously in danger by the award of a penalty kick against Wilson for hands. It was indeed hard luck, for even the Southend spectators agreed the handling was in no way intentional. As a matter of fact, the ball came from Southend's Wilson at a terrific pace and struck the Luton centre-half on the thigh and rebounded to his arm.

However, a penalty it was, and Wileman, who was reported never to have missed scoring from such an award, was entrusted with the kick. On this occasion he drove the ball hard on to the crossbar, and although the leather rebounded into play, Bateman was able to catch the return shot and thus save the situation. It would have been very hard luck for Luton if any other result had materialised from the award, and even the home spectators were willing to admit as much, although they naturally would have been delighted at their good fortune if a different ending had come about. Nothing more happened up to the interval, and Southend were on the whole rather lucky to be level, for Luton had certainly proved themselves the smarter combination up to this stage.

Eight minutes after the re-start Luton took the lead, and visions of a victory caused a tremendous shout to go up from the excursionists. The goal was the result of a centre by Stephenson, for although Kibbell got it away in the first instance, he did not clear, and Smith practically bundled him and the ball into the net. Luton continued to more than hold their own for some time after this without increasing the lead, and then Southend once more became the attacking party. Axcell hit the crossbar with a tremendous drive, and meeting the return, put over, but the ball was not long away from Luton's goal, for once more Axcell sent in a fine attempt, which Bateman tipped over for a corner kick, and this brought along the equalising point. The flag kick dropped right at Wilson's toe, standing only three or four yards out and quite unmarked, and he had quite a simple opening, of which he took full advantage. There were still twenty minutes left for play, and Southend, for the first time in the match, appeared likely winners, for they went all out for the leading goal, but fortunately the Luton defence held out in a surprising manner and quite unlike what has been the case recently. Then, eight minutes from time, Stephenson, securing the ball in midfield, made one of his old-time dashes down the field, and clearing all opposition, let drive with a well-judged shot which appeared certain to score, but the wind seemed to lift the ball just as it reached the goal, and it went an inch or so over instead of finding a resting-place in the net. The effort fully deserved to score, and it would have been a happy day out for the seven hundred Lutonians if this shot had given the victory to Luton; but it was not to be, and they had to content themselves with cheering the players as they left the field for getting one point in this difficult game.

The feature of the game, from a Luton standpoint, was the undoubted stiffening of the defence compared with recent matches. Jarvie quite came up to expectations, his tackling being well timed, and it was pretty evident early in the game that he would make an appreciable difference in this respect. While not claiming in any way to be a polished back, he only twice during the game made a real slip, and altogether made a favourable impression. Potts also was "miles" in front of what we have seen recently, and in the opinion of many present was the best back on the field. The halves all did their work well, Bob Hawkes being, of course, the cleverer field player, but Wilson never allowed Mason to get the upper hand, and for once the opposing centre-forward was kept well in check. It cannot be claimed that the attack quite came up to the standard of the defence but the right-wing pair were better than anything on the Southend side, Wileman proving himself the best forward on the field, whilst Stephenson was ever dangerous and was usually master of Spencer in a close tackle. Holland was not particularly noticeable, but he got through some good work at times, his chief failing being his inability to judge the ball in the air; still, he quite justified his trial. Smith played one of his best games for Luton, but Worth was not in his early season form, although some excuse can be made on account of his injury. Although not specially mentioned above when speaking of the defence, Bateman did everything possible, and looks to have earned his regular place.

Southend's most effective players were Wilson, Axcell, Kibbell, and Thomson, and of these the first-named was probably the best; indeed, he was the only forward to show anything brilliant in the way of attack, for the other most likely-scoring shots came from Axcell of the middle line. Mason was a great disappointment to the Southend spectators, for he was painfully slow and did not give much evidence of his shooting abilities. Thomson was easily the better back, while Kibbell kept a very safe goal. Still, on the whole, Southend did not prove so formidable a side as the majority of Lutonians had anticipated, and for a full hour of the game Luton were well on top of them.