

LUTON v. STOKE.

Played on Good Friday on the Luton Town Ground. Result:—

Luton 2 goals.

Stoke 1 goal.

Teams:—

Luton: Mitchell; Elvey and Robinson; Fred Hawkes, Frith and Bob Hawkes; Durrant, Wileman, Simms, Rollinson and Hoar.

Stoke: Gadsden; Turner and Milne; Jones, Parker and Bradley; Hargreaves, Herbert, Smith, Ellis and Tempest.

Referee: Mr. L. Bullmer (Northampton).

Gate receipts, £321. Attendance about 11,000.

As Luton had only ten men most of the game this result was not at all bad. There is little doubt that if Durrant had not been injured the score for Luton would have been a goal or two more, and probably Stoke would not have been able to have pressed to such an extent on Luton's right as to have got their single goal. The work by Durrant and Wileman in the early part of the game was a delight to watch. Well supported by Fred Hawkes, the right wing repeatedly made ground very quickly, and Stoke found the pressure becoming too severe. There were two or three fouls in succession, and once it was only just outside the penalty area. There was great enthusiasm amongst the enormous crowd which was packed into the stands and terraces and overflowed along the entrances to the grand stand and from Maple-road. In the first minute Durrant forced a corner, and soon after that a neat piece of triangular work between Fred Hawkes, Wileman and Durrant sent the game that way again. The ball was swung across to Hoar, who took rather long to get into position for his kick. When he had accomplished it, Simms met the ball and headed in. Gadsden had a great job to hold it, and there was quite a splash of sawdust as he went down with it. It did seem as though the ball was over the line. At any rate, it was a narrow shave for Stoke.

The Stoke forwards were a bustling lot, and in a trice they had the ball at the other end and Mitchell had a bouncing shot to deal with. He managed it well. A free kick for handling just outside the penalty area was awkward for Luton, and from this Stoke got a corner, but eventually Elvey cleared. These incidents took but a very small portion of the first fifteen minutes, during which Luton were doing practically all the pressing. The bulky Bradley, at left half, had also been trying to render assistance to other members of his team in stemming the attack, but he began to find that he would have quite sufficient to do to keep Durrant in check, so he concentrated on that. At the end of the first 25 minutes he was relieved of that responsibility, for when the two came into contact about that time, Durrant received an injury to the groin and it was necessary for him to leave. He was attended by trainer Lawson, and although he returned a minute or so before the interval he was practically useless. He dared not stretch himself out to get the ball. It was hoped that by resting he might be fit for the Brentford match, so he did not come out in the second half at all.

Fortunately, before Durrant's injury occurred, Luton had scored. This was about 20 minutes from the start. Luton were pressing so much that one of the visitors used his hands on the ball just outside the penalty area. When the game had been started again, Simms dashed away to the left. A Stoke man made a despairing appeal for offside—a ridiculous claim. The ball was passed out to Hoar, who centred beautifully. Simms and Rollinson rushed in together, and Rollinson very neatly headed the ball between Gadsden's right side and the post. It was a good goal and Luton had deserved it for their superior play. Just previously Wileman had put in a fine left foot shot from the right wing, and the whole forward line were working with eagerness and cleverness. Tempest missed a fairly good opportunity for Stoke when he put the ball in weakly from the left wing, but Mitchell whenever tested showed soundness. Just after Durrant had left the field Tempest made a dash on the wing and put the ball right across the goal a few yards out. One of the other forwards tried to hook it through. It was fortunate that the ball went straight to Mitchell, and fortunate also that Mitchell was quick enough to gather it from such a short range. However, he managed it and dodged another forward and cleared.

These attacks by Stoke were few compared with the attempts by Luton. Simms particularly kept dashing in and forcing his way through the defence. But after Durrant had gone off it was palpable that Luton were greatly handicapped. Wileman found himself outnumbered time after time and once or twice looked anxiously towards the stand to see if "Jarnie" was coming out, for once or twice if only he had had a player on his right to tap the ball to and then to have had it tapped back again he could have kept the Stoke defence busy, but the wing was clipped and Wileman could do but very little afterwards. Added to this was the fact that Rollinson received a very nasty kick in the early part of the match. It was noticed that he did not play anything like his usual game, and the injury he received in every way accounted for it. Stoke realised the position of the Luton team and took as much advantage of it as possible. They swung the ball about from side to side and kept Luton on the run. Herbert and Smith got away once and Luton were in considerable danger. Robinson raced after Herbert while Mitchell snatched the ball up from Smith and dived between the two forwards. One of the Stoke men tried to get the ball away and the click of a boot sounded very

clearly, but Mitchell once more got Luton out of a difficulty. The pressure by Stoke on the Luton right was heavy, but Fred Hawkes played a great game.

Luton's second goal was the softest thing imaginable. Two minutes after the restart Milne miskicked. Simms and Wileman were well up, yet they and the Stoke men could not seem to get hold of the ball properly. First one would poke it a yard, and then the other. The goalkeeper also tried to do something. He rushed out, and while Gadsden was on the ground Simms once more got near to the elusive ball. Simms reached his leg out at full length and seemed to touch the ball with the bottom of his boot. At any rate he managed to push it forward. The ball just rolled over the line. A Stoke back at that moment dashed up and turned it out, but he was just too late. Stoke had a narrow escape soon afterwards, when Hoar drove in a beautiful shot from the left. The goalkeeper hit the ball and it seemed to be going into goal, but it twisted outwards.

Bradley, whose stolid frame had been too much for Durrant, was one of the chief factors in securing Stoke's goal. He placed the ball nicely in front of Smith, about ten yards from goal, and the Stoke centre-forward went between the backs and scored very neatly. Smith played a fine game. Frith quickly realised this, and made himself into a very substantial shadow of Smith, but there were times when others of the Stoke forwards also needed holding and many times Frith dropped back to assist Elvey and Robinson. In that respect, Frith's fine stride was very useful. He showed a wonderful turn of speed and more than once overtook a Stoke man who had raced away and tackled him cleanly and neatly. Frith was easily the best of the Luton men. His height was a very useful factor, too, when he and Smith both went to head the ball.

Elvey and Robinson did very well, but there still seems a lack of complete understanding, with the result that there is a danger of their getting in one another's way. Elvey was apt to come up the field too much, but he was a very safe kicker. Robinson made some terrific punts up the field, but he was apt to place the ball on the opposing backs and at other times to get his foot too far under the ball. They were a better pair of backs than Stoke's, and the Luton halves were also the better trio. Fred Hawkes played another fine game, and Bob put in some capital work, particularly towards the end when Luton were striving very hard to get another goal. Bradley was a very useful man to Stoke. Oftimes he drew the defence nicely before passing. Of course, the handicap to Luton through playing with ten men spoilt several chances. About a quarter of an hour from the end Hoar put one of his favourite centres across. Wileman tried his best to reach it, but it was just a little too high. If only there had been an outside right, it is very probable Luton would have got another goal, for it was a good position from which to shoot. The home team made great efforts in the last minutes of the game, and once Hoar was getting along so well that Turner fouled him, but it was outside the penalty area. Simms produced the best shot of the match when from on the left wing he set the ball towards goal in fine style. It was on the curve and it looked all the way a scorer, but it went just over the crossbar. In the very last minute Hoar put the ball across. The back slipped. Simms had the field. The goalkeeper ran out, and when Simms shot the ball hit the goalkeeper's head and went for a corner.