

FOOTBALL.

LUTON v. NORTHAMPTON.

Played at Luton on Christmas Day. Result:—

Luton 1 goal.

Northampton 1 goal.

Luton: Mitchell; Elvey and Dunn; F. Hawkes, Frith and R. Hawkes; Roberts, Wileman, Simms, Rollinson and Hoar.

Northampton: Thorpe; Clipstone and Davies; Tull, Manning and Tomkins; Hughes, Smith, Lessons, Bellamy, and Freeman.

Referee: Mr. H. Thompson (West Norwood).

A Luton—Northampton match has always drawn large gates at holiday times at Luton and although this year the gate was a good one, the khaki clad figures only were not needed to remind one of the special circumstances now prevailing. The numerous vacant seats on the "stands" told their own tale.

The match was a typical one for these teams. There was hardly a dull minute from start to finish. It was very keenly contested, and although there was very little to choose between the teams, Luton were rather unfortunate in not winning. Northampton owe the result to the clever goalkeeping of Thorpe. He made some brilliant saves, and the great confidence the backs had in his skill and judgment was frequently demonstrated. On one occasion, when hard pressed, Davies sent in a good shot for his own goalkeeper, who picked the ball up very neatly and cleared. It was the only alternative. Had a back been there with less confidence in his goalkeeper, a goal would undoubtedly have been scored.

The forward work in both teams was particularly good, and some really clever combination was witnessed. The balance of honours, however, should be given to the Luton men, who very early in the match were on the aggressive. Their efforts were soon rewarded. Following neat and tricky play on the part of Rollinson and Hoar, Simms was given a good opportunity and he turned it to account. Thorpe only partially saved his shot, and the ball found the net.

Luton continued on the aggressive, and Bob Hawkes gave Thorpe a difficult shot to deal with a few minutes later. The goalkeeper, however, was equal to the occasion, and although some close play in goal ensued, Luton were unable to get in just the final touch.

Northampton subsequently made a smart attack on the Luton goal, but hasty play on the left wing spoiled what appeared to be a very dangerous move.

It was not long before Luton were worrying the visitors' defence again, and the ball being swung across from the right wing with splendid precision, Hoar was enabled to get in a stinging shot which Thorpe only saved at the expense of a corner. Roberts later came right across the field, and beating his opponents very prettily, all but scored with a good shot. Thorpe soon had another chance to prove his ability. Simms sent in a shot that looked certain to score, but to the surprise of all, Thorpe just managed to reach the ball and tip it over the bar. Nothing materialised from the resultant corner.

In the closing stages of the half, Mitchell was frequently given difficult shots to deal with, from Lessons, Bellamy, and Smith. He did particularly well in saving from the last named player.

In the second half a re-arrangement in the Northampton forward line was made. Lessons took the right half position, whilst Tull played centre. Luton did not seem to make much good progress in this "forty-five," and Mitchell was called upon frequently. Tull relied a great deal upon individual effort, and although he several times beat the Luton backs very surprisingly, he always failed at the crucial point.

Rollinson, early in the half, missed very narrowly with a good header. Simms, Wileman and Roberts also made promising efforts, but Thorpe always came out triumphant.

Northampton's goal came in the last few minutes of the game. It was a case—so far as Luton were concerned—of "too many cooks," etc. A smart attack was made on the Luton goal, and all the players crowded into the goal to assist in its defence. The result was that when Smith headed in, the ball was "muffed" and passed over the line. No doubt, had Mitchell alone been left to deal with the situation, he would have had a good chance of saving.

Although Luton strove hard during the remaining few minutes of the game to regain their lead, they always found Thorpe quite prepared and they never succeeded in scoring again.