

Luton's Heaviest Defeat.

Lively Khaki Supporters at Norwich.

Under normal conditions the journey to Norwich is rather trying, the Great Eastern Railway being scarcely so satisfactory to travel upon as the Great Western, the system which fortunately caters for most of the long distance clubs, but on Saturday it about broke the record, the train being just on an hour and a half late, so that there was only just time to get to the ground in time for the kick-off at the regulation hour. The Nest is the most peculiar Southern League ground there is on account of the cramped position it occupies, and as the majority of the Luton players were making its acquaintance for the first time it took several of them by surprise. The spectators are spread about in patches, while at one end and part of the side there are none whatever, and this gives the pitch a very curious appearance to anyone strange to it. It was evident that the recent change to Arctic weather had been more pronounced in the eastern counties than at Luton, and the journey down was made with the country several inches deep in snow. The playing pitch at Norwich is never an ideal one, and lying as it does at the foot of a steep rise it was in a very bad state on Saturday. In many places the mud was almost a foot deep, and the ball beat the man many times during the game from this cause.

Norwich City have suffered severely through the war, and on Saturday there would not be more than 3,000 present at the match. Quite half this number were in khaki, one of the local directors making the remark there were scarcely any of their regular Norwich crowd present. The majority of the military element were scattered on the big terrace, but assembled on the stand were something like 200 khaki-clad Lutonians, who had evidently commandeered a supply of light blue straw hats from home with blue and white streamers attached. They marched through Norwich before the match, and attracted much attention from the pedestrians, who could not understand the lavish display of light blue favours. On arrival at the ground they made things pretty lively with a medley of music-hall ditties, slightly altered by local allusions, which would be somewhat foreign to the City supporters, who, however, took it all in good part. When Luton filed out into the field a regular shout went up, and Bob Hawkes was requested to make a speech, which the Luton captain modestly declined to do. There were many enquiries made as to "how Luton was looking," and others of a more personal character relating to the Luton girls. At the commencement the noise kept up was possibly a bit trying to the more sedate occupants of the stand, and if only Luton could have made a decent fight for honour doubtless this would have remained a feature to the close. But, unfortunately, the City had the advantage of playing down the slope at the start, and as this means shooting in at their favourite goal they set up too big a handicap before the interval, and Luton never really looked like adding to their stock of points. For a long spell in the second half they seemed likely to reduce the half-time margin, but the scoring of the fifth goal turned the course of the game once more in favour of the home side.

The names of the players were:—

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

Norwich City:—Lonsdale; Allen and Mackenzie; Collins, Woodlands and Molyneux; Potter, Taylor, Woods, Ritchie, and A. W. Froedick.

Referee, Mr. J. T. Hornby, London.

The opening was decidedly in favour of the City, and Mitchell's charge seemed likely to fall any minute, but although the home players appeared to be able to judge better what the ball was likely to do when it pitched in the mud, even they failed to direct it through the Luton goal. It was quite amusing at times to see a player from each side go for the ball and completely miss it, and then someone else come along and kick it. It was a trying experience for Elvey and Dunn, for if they timed their kick so as to take into account the roll or bounce of the ball they were as often as not completely deceived, while if they attempted to dribble it was fatal. Still it was about a quarter of an hour before a goal was scored, and then it came as a result of a free kick given against Elvey in tackling Froedick near the corner flag. The ball was landed in the mud just in front of the Luton goal, and a regular scramble ensued. No one could get control, and Mitchell came out in an attempt to clear the danger, but Ritchie just managed to get a free kick at the ball, and sent it goalwards. Dunn fell back and sent it out, but the referee judged it had travelled over the line and it once gave the City their opening point. The Luton players protested, but it was no use, and, indeed, from the stand the ball appeared well through before Dunn got it away.

The game continued in favour of the home side, but it was a bad slip on Dunn's part which led up to Woods netting the second goal. Potter, who was making matters rather awkward on the home right wing, secured the ball very luckily when it seemed certain that Dunn would block his way, and having left the Luton back standing he squared the ball beautifully, and Woods had no one but Mitchell to beat. It was a good drive, but, as the spectators claimed, it was really Potter's goal, for he made the opening, and it would have been a bad miss if Woods had not converted. Another free kick outside the penalty area was the starting point for the City's third goal, for although Mitchell saved in fine style by tipping the ball over the bar, when Woodlands shot from centre-half the corner kick was nicely placed by Potter, and Woods put through neatly.

Being three goals behind, Luton's chance looked hopeless, but curiously it was from this point the improvement set in, and it was Lonsdale who was now the more occupied custodian. Simms shot in a terrific drive, which Lonsdale only got clear by falling and turning the ball round the post for a corner. This was quickly followed by another corner, and the Luton Territorials began to liven things up a bit. Then they got a real chance to cheer, for following a spell of pressure from Roberts and Wileman the ball came over to the

left wing. Lonsdale came out to meet the ball, but failed to gather, and Hoar being well up easily placed the ball through. If the score had remained with this margin up to the interval it is just possible Luton might have pulled the game out of the fire, for it was almost half-time, and with the advantage of the slope two goals would not have been so great a handicap. Just on the stroke of half-time, however, Taylor got in a fourth goal for Norwich, and the score at that stage stood:—

Norwich City 4, Luton 1.

Luton were soon on the job after the restart, and even now hopes were raised in the breasts of the Luton contingent. The home defenders were very vigorous, and fouls were frequent. Rollinson was the first to come in for illegitimate attention, and from the resulting free kick Simms had the misfortune to hit the upright with a hard shot which beat Lonsdale completely. A minute or two later Simms himself was badly fouled when practically clear, and Bob Hawkes tried a first-time drive, which cannoned off Woodlands in a very fortunate manner. It was a constant attack on the City goal, but Lonsdale made several daring saves, getting hurt on one occasion in a mix up with Simms. Two or three corners came to nothing, and then Roberts made one of his characteristic runs, winding up with a beautiful centre, which Simms gathered, but again he was unlucky enough to hit the upright with a bang.

Roberts was now right on song, and time after time beat his man, only to find his work thrown away when the ball was planted in the quagmire in front of the home goal. Still it was quite expected Luton would at least reduce the margin, as they fully deserved to do, and therefore it was somewhat in the nature of a surprise when Taylor screwed the ball from a few yards off the goal line into the net, making the City tally into five. This unexpected disaster took a bit of the fight out of the Luton players, and during the closing stages Norwich held their own. The result was therefore:—

Norwich City 5, Luton 1.

The heavy defeat gives an altogether wrong impression of the game, for although the City deserved the win, Lonsdale had quite as anxious a time as Mitchell for long periods of the match. Probably the main factor in the actual result was the first-time clearances made by the Norwich backs, who never stood on ceremony, and met the pressure better than the Luton pair. Lonsdale took many risks, and with the single exception of Hoar's goal they came off trumps, and he also must share the honours with his backs. The right wingers on either side were the forwards most in the picture, and Roberts was quite equal to Potter, who was the local favourite.

As a result of the defeat Luton have dropped another place in the table, and are now fifth from the bottom, with 18 points for 22 matches, and a goal average of 34 against 45.