

Date: 16 November 1895
Opposition: Woolwich Arsenal
Competition: League

Mercury

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LIVERPOOL v. WOOLWICH ARSENAL.

The first meeting of these clubs took place on Saturday at Plumstead. In anticipation of the arduous fray, the team travelled up to London on Friday, and remained there till Saturday morning, going on to Woolwich in time for the match. Both sides were short of their full complement of players, but Liverpool were by far the worse off in this respect, being short of Dunlop and M'Que, while the Arsenal were without Powell, their full back. A little before time the visitors appeared, the Reds following immediately, and the respective sides lined up as follows, under command of Mr. W. W. Stacey:—Liverpool: M'Queen, goal; Goldie and Wilkie, backs; M'Cartney, Keech, and Holmes, half-backs; Geary, Ross, Bradshaw, Becton, and Hannah, forwards. Woolwich Arsenal: Storer, goal; Davies and Caldwell, backs; Crawford, Jenkyns, and Boyle, half-backs; Mortimer, Hare, Gordon, Boyd, and Mills, forwards. Ross having lost the toss, the visitors were compelled to face a fierce wind, and upon starting the Blues were at once on the attack, and after Ross had put in a spurt, Wilkie, in shooting, sent past the post. To this effort the home team replied by a lengthy shot, which also went over the goal line. Following a grand clearance by Wilkie, Geary was called up for offside, while immediately after M'Cartney was penalised for foul throwing. The free kick availed the home side but little, and upon the Liverpool forwards rushing away, Jenkyns smartly interposed, and Gordon was given a great chance by Mortimer, but missed sadly. Again the Reds were placed in possession, and Mortimer's opportune shot was charged down by M'Cartney. The Liverpool men then improved, and by keeping the ball low and well under control rather bothered their opponents by their crisp passing, and Bradshaw wound up some grand centre work by easily defeating Storer. Gordon was then next prominent for a fast sprint, winding up by delivering a terrific shot, which fortunately went over the bar. A miscalculated pass by Geary nullified an apparently clear opening for Liverpool, in reply to which the Reds again sent over the goal line. Geary then showed up with a rapid sprint, which called upon Storer to use his hands, and followed this excellent work up with another fine effort, which rather temporarily upset the home defence. After Bradshaw had somewhat muddled a series of beautiful passes in the middle, Becton and Hannah combined well, and caused Storer to throw out, but Holmes met the ball and returned hotly, bringing the goalkeeper well out of his ground. Ross fouled the custodian when endeavouring to get possession, and the opportunity slipped by. A long shot by Davies removed the scene of operations, and Mortimer, in finally centring, lifted over the bar. Off-side afterwards spoilt Ross, and Wilkie, after being beaten by Mills, was compelled to kick into touch to save further damage. The high wind had a most deterrent effect upon the play, especially upon the home side. After a foul had been given against Ross, Jenkyns almost

brought disaster to the visitors by well placing the free kick, Gordon just missing heading into the charmed space by inches. When the Liverpool forwards were under weigh Crawford dashed in, and intercepted a pass by Holmes, and afterwards led up a fierce attack upon the Liverpool goal, Boyd finally heading over the bar. Nothing of moment occurred for some time till Mortimer got the best of a tussle with Goldie, but the Anfield defence worked splendidly together, and eventually repulsed the attack. Bradshaw then worked up a forward movement, and Geary was unfortunate in his attempt to gauge the leather in the variable wind. A corner followed, but Hannah mis-directed, and a hot five minutes to Liverpool succeeded, the chief item being a high-dropping shot by Mortimer, which was capitally attended to by M'Queen, while several other rushes of a well-known character were splendidly coped with by the whole of the Blues' half-backs and full-backs. At length, as the result of some telling forward work, Liverpool worked again to the front, but Ross could not reach Bradshaw's final pass just in time, and immediately half-time was called. Upon resuming, the Arsenal went to the front very quickly, and Gordon appeared to be dangerous when pulled up by Keech. Judiciously fed by Holmes, the Liverpool forwards replied in characteristic fashion, but both Bradshaw and Ross missed what appeared to be fairly easy chances. Strong kicking by both Davies and Caldwell opened up the game, and, Wilkie being beaten by Mills and Hare, a glorious chance was given to Boyd to equalise, but he failed lamentably. After Gordon had brought M'Queen to his knees, Bradshaw, Ross, and Geary went away in beautiful style, but Ross was again successfully tackled at the finish by Caldwell. The visiting forwards came again, however, and how the Woolwich goal was saved was a mystery. A corner then fell to Liverpool's share, but, being neatly negotiated by the home eleven, Gordon raised the hopes of the crowd by sending just by the post. The Liverpool team then attacked with greater earnestness, and, as the result of a dashing run by Hannah, Geary headed the second point when the goalkeeper had left his charge. Before the finish was signalled both sides held a temporary advantage, the home eleven perhaps having more of the play, but Liverpool obtaining and creating better chances, and ultimately the match concluded, after a most fierce battle, in a win for Liverpool by 2 goals to nil.

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Liverpool's journey to the South proved to be one of the most pleasant and enjoyable affairs the club has ever undertaken. Everything was so nicely arranged that not a single hitch occurred throughout the time the team were away from Liverpool, and the grand victory put every one in the best of humours coming home. The party, under the supervision of Messrs. Ramsay and M'Kenna, arrived in London early on Friday evening, and after dinner at the Covent Garden Hotel was taken to the Tivoli Theatre. Saturday morning was spent in sight-seeing, as was also Saturday evening after the match, and the capitally-arranged little tour was brought to a happy close when the party arrived in Liverpool in the early hours of Sunday morning. Recognising the forward position of the Woolwich eleven, and consequently the uncertainty and importance of the game, the Liverpool directors were not in the best of humours when it was found that M'Queen was suffering from an injury to his knee, obtained whilst practising during the week, but it was this unexpected blow that seemed to infuse greater determination and enthusiasm into the other players, and when, after about five or ten minutes' play, it was seen that Keech was worthily filling the difficult centre-half position, the whole eleven worked so compactly together that it can be safely stated that the Northerners had fairly got the measure of their opponents, and were playing in a winning vein. Perhaps, primarily, the real reason which brought about the happy result was the fact that

the Liverpool team were cleverer and cooler, and by adopting an entirely different mode of tactics, under the abnormal climatic conditions, were always a bit in front of their opponents. The terrific wind told far more against the play of the Arsenal men than against the visitors. Beyond Gordon and Jenkyns, few of the Woolwich team had any idea of keeping the ball on the ground, the majority being content with heavy and wild kicking, with the result that when the ball got up in the air the gale almost blew it where it liked. This kind of play properly upset the Southerners, and although they had two splendid chances they were so upset that they made a sad mess of both. Once in the game the Arsenal forwards subjected the Liverpool defence to about as hot a five minutes as ever M'Queen and his supports have experienced this season, but thanks to a remarkable display of coolness by the whole of the rear-guard, especially M'Queen, M'Cartney, and Wilkie, the danger was at length repulsed. Never before have the backs and half-backs been so highly tried, and as this was the crucial point of the game, to them is every credit due for their united and compact work. The match was most fiercely contested, and had the referee not been a firm and decided individual trouble might have arisen on several occasions. Now and then the Arsenal forwards gave a fairly good display, and by reason of their long cross-passes and sudden rushes were always dangerous when opportunities came their way, but, thanks to M'Cartney, Keech, and Holmes, this but seldom happened. To sum the whole game up, Liverpool fully deserved their victory, as Saturday's game is the best they have played this season. They were cleverer and much faster all through, and played with an extraordinary amount of dash. In fact, such vim has not been previously seen this season, and upon the development of such a necessary adjunct to football is decidedly gratifying, for in this particular line the Liverpool

forwards especially have been greatly lacking. The whole of the Anfield team played so well, individually and collectively, and were so knit together that hardly one player stood out in greater prominence than another. M. M'Queen did not have so very much to do, but what work came his direction was of a sultry or electric character. One shot in particular—a high dropping one, which at first seemed to be going yards wide but which was turned in by the wind—was magnificently dealt with, and that, too, with the Reds' forwards going for him at express speed. In fact, like the remainder of the team, M'Queen took the match much more seriously than has occurred before, and consequently each player added lustre to his fame. Wilkie and Goldie were a solid pair, and although their work was not of a showy or brilliant order it was extremely effective. The half-back line was uncommonly clever, and in spite of Holmes being perhaps slightly the best a due word of thanks must be given to Keech for his unexpected clever display at centre-half. He seemed to make it his mission to have either the man or ball each time he tackled, and by the time the second half was well in progress his opponents had had enough of this modest youth. M'Cartney, after a long spell, reappeared, and as ever played his usual untiring game, being especially clever in saving in the goal mouth. The whole of the forwards harmonised beautifully, and invariably kept the ball under control, and the rapid passes and short sprints between Ross and Bradshaw which brought the first goal was an unqualified treat, and would have sent a Liverpool audience—no matter who obtained it—into ecstasy, but which was received by the southerners with contemptuous silence. Geary was in great form, and was very prominent throughout, while Hannah, whose unassuming work often passes notice, was brought into great relief towards the end, when he simply ran round his men with ease. The three inside men, as usual, worked effectively and to a purpose, and the play of the three is so similar that to disturb them would be nothing short of a calamity. Bradshaw profited by the advice given him, and when hampered, as also did Ross and Becton, frequently drove the ball out to the wing, and opened up in this way some lovely opportunities for Geary. The Arsenal team were all put out with the high state of the wind, and by not suiting their play to the conditions were frequently chagrined to see, what they supposed to be a dangerous attack upon their enemy's quarter, the point turned against themselves, through lifting the ball into the air. Storer did not have so much to do as he should, because the Liverpool forwards in the second half dallied too much with the chances created, and allowed Caldwell and Davies to nip times without number; but nevertheless he did some excellent work. The backs were always good, but the halves were frequently beaten. Crawford was very fine in the first half, and rather got the better of the Liverpool left; but afterwards they had their revenge. Jenkyns could not make much out of Bradshaw, and his play was not marred with so much roughness as on previous meetings. For men coming from first-class clubs, it was astonishing to see the Woolwich forwards, whenever they had any chance of making play, descend to such idiotic manoeuvres as they did. Their last idea seemed to be to keep the ball on the floor, while most of their long dropping centres, which under ordinary conditions would have dropped into the goal mouth, were carried yards wide by the wind. Keech was given a run to stop Gordon, and so we did he fulfil his work that that player had but one chance throughout the game.