

FOOTBALL.

PORTSMOUTH v. LUTON.

On Saturday the Lutonians journeyed to Portsmouth to play the local team in a Southern League fixture. The match took place at Fratton Park and there was a good muster of spectators. The conditions were favourable to good football. Luton played better football than the homesters and were frequently cheered by the spectators. Some of the London papers stated that Luton played a rough game, but it stands to reason that the local supporters would not cheer them if they had been so very rough.

The teams were as follows:

Luton: Ord; Lindsay and Sharp; Hawkes, White, and Williams; Durrant, Blessington, Brown, Tierney, and Colvin.

Portsmouth: Reilly; Turner and Wilkie; Blyth, Stringfellow, and Cleghorn; Marshall, Cunliffe, Bedingfield, W. Smith, and S. Smith.

Portsmouth won the toss and found the Luton defence very strong. Ord being very lively in goal. Luton held the lead at the start and if they had taken advantage of their opportunities "Pompey" must have succumbed to the united and splendid efforts of the front string. A corner against the homesters proved unproductive, and after stopping some very good shots from Bedingfield and Smith Ord had no chance to save a curling centre from Marshall, which Cunliffe managed to head through. Thus the first point was notched when the game was but 10 or 11 minutes old. Early in the match Tierney so badly cut his hand that he was forced to retire twice during the game, he being away for a quarter of an hour the second time. He, however, very pluckily played again after the interval, and stuck to his work bravely until the finish of the game. When in the bath, in the dressing-room Tierney was so weak from loss of blood, that he fainted. Just as his head was going under water, Blessington got him out. Soon after the mishap to the inside left Luton tried to equalise and broke away several times and Blessington, after some good play, struck the cross-bar with a good shot. Tierney sent the leather into the hands of the goalkeeper, who promptly got rid of it. Then Portsmouth took a turn at pressing. Colvin passed to Durrant not long afterwards, but that player was quickly robbed of the ball by Wilkie. Later, Colvin passed to Blessington, but Wilkie touched the ball before it reached its destination. Blessington placed it in the net; but the referee, not noticing that Wilkie touched the ball, gave it as an off-side goal. Until the interval Luton had most of the game, but failed to score, and so the figures were:

PORTSMOUTH, 1; LUTON, 0.

After the resumption Luton were very strong again and had several tries to penetrate the defence. Towards the end Stringfellow was injured and was assisted towards the pavilion, and did not play again during the match. Durrant missed scoring with an open goal. The Luton defence was at its best, while the front string was good, as were also the halves. Hawkes and White were fine tacklers. There was no scoring in the second half, and so the result was a lucky win for the Portsmouth men with the following scores:

PORTSMOUTH, 1; LUTON, 0.

The Portsmouth Evening News football edition gives the following report of the game:—

J. Brown kicked off about seven minutes late, and almost immediately an error by Blyth gave the visitors their first corner. Durrant, however, could do little with it, and the ball was got away by Portsmouth, Marshall being conspicuous with a clever sprint. As a result a corner fell to Portsmouth, and Bedingfield went very close to heading it in. Directly afterwards Marshall and Cunliffe were again too much for Williams and Sharp, but Cunliffe slipped at the critical moment and could not get his shot in. Wilkie next cleared an awkward rush, but Portsmouth quickly retaliated, Lindsay having to kick into touch. From the throw in, however, Portsmouth left wing was again prominent, a fine shot from the outside man travelling a little wide. Colvin was extremely "nippy" on the left, and Harry Turner failing to bring off a clearance, Wilkie rushed across and punted away in the nick of time. From a goal-kick which resulted, Marshall, Cunliffe and Blyth were cheered for a pretty piece of combined work, and Bedingfield got clean away, and his pass put Cunliffe off-side, and the ball travelled behind the line. Brown created a clever opening for Durrant, but Cleghorn nullified the chance, and the home forwards, who were playing a great game, were seen to advantage in Ord's vicinity, and twice went within an ace of opening the Portsmouth account. Marshall, who fairly had the measure of Sharp, had a fine dropping shot punted away by the goalie, who, however, was immediately afterwards beaten by Cunliffe, who received a fine whipping centre from his outside man and promptly

would increase their lead immediately afterwards, but Steve Smith's shot was ineffective, and just later the outside left had "hard lines" in being badly fouled by Hawkes when fairly under way. Bedingfield was keeping his wings well supplied, with the result that Portsmouth were able to continue the attack, and Marshall had another lovely shot negotiated by Ord. At the other end Reilly dealt with a stinger from Durrant. Hereabouts an exciting bout was witnessed in the vicinity of Reilly's goal. First of all the left wing eluded the home defence, and Reilly saved remarkably from Tierney. The ball was not got properly away, however, and for some seconds it kept bobbing about in front of Portsmouth's goal in an alarming fashion, and it was not until Blessington kicked outside that relief was afforded. After this reverse Portsmouth got to work again, and Marshall gained an abortive corner, while Lindsay prevented an almost certain score by kicking into touch. Bedingfield gave Marshall a clear opening, but the latter shot inaccurately from 30 yards' range. Portsmouth were enjoying the best of the exchanges, most of the play devolving upon the right wing, and Ord saving several remarkably good shots. Steve Smith was always in the Portsmouth vanguard, and on one occasion as a result of one of his fine centres both Bedingfield and Marshall made good attempts to increase the score. Ord on both occasions saved well. Stringfellow kept Brown fairly boxed up in the centre, and the erstwhile Portsmouth forward could rarely get going. Following this Portsmouth slackened down and even play was followed by a futile attack by the visitors, who on one occasion almost equalised through Durrant, Turner getting his head to the ball in the nick of time. Wilkie gave away a corner, but it came to naught, although the straw-plaiters continued to press their claim and the home defence was given a rare amount of work. Once Durrant centred to Colvin, who looked certain to beat Reilly, but the Irish International saved splendidly; the whistle going for off-side. As the interval approached Portsmouth were in the ascendancy, and some clever work was rendered abortive by Bedingfield being fouled outside the penalty line. On the stroke of half-time two corners fell to the home team, but were not improved upon. Half-time score:

PORTSMOUTH, 1; LUTON, 0.

On re-starting Tierney, who had been absent during the last few minutes of the first half through a badly cut hand, was able to resume his place in the field, the injury having been dressed. Portsmouth commenced pressing, and Marshall had a good shot disposed of by Ord, while Lindsay stopped Bedingfield and Cunliffe. Characteristic dribbling by Steve Smith was followed by pretty passing by the home left-wingers, but the leather went outside, and the effort was spoilt. The home halves distinguished themselves with clever tactics, although on one occasion Tierney got the better of a bout with Blyth, but Turner hauled him up. Marshall tried an oblique shot, and sent the ball whizzing across the goal-mouth, and Steve Smith missed an easy opportunity by faulty shooting. Just afterwards another exciting incident was witnessed. Wilkie had cleverly robbed Blessington of the ball and passed out to Steve Smith, who essayed a tremendous drive which White almost headed through his own goal, the ball taking the cross bar with a bang. Cunliffe and Bedingfield tried hard to put it through, and Marshall should have had no difficulty in scoring, but missed the opportunity. A corner fell to the visitors at the other end, and as a result Brown succeeded in getting the ball past Reilly, but he was off-side, and the point was disallowed. At the other end a clever centre by the old "Villan" was almost turned to account by his brother, but Ord's goal seemed to bear a charmed existence, and once again the ball went travelling to the other end. It did not remain there long, the Portsmouth forwards being again prominent. Cunliffe sent in a fine shot of too high elevation. A similar fate befell Blessington at the other end, and when Portsmouth again applied pressure Bedingfield was fouled by White. Brown had had luck with an effort from long range, and from a free kick in a good position Portsmouth looked like scoring, but Bedingfield was unable to get his cranium to the ball in time. Both Blyth and Wilkie were playing a sound defensive game, and they twice nullified excellent tries by the visitors' wingers. Marshall put in a nice run but W. Smith lost a chance through dallying and Stringfellow by clever play prevented. Marshall was prominent with a nice sprint, and from his centre Bedingfield headed just too high. Immediately after the same player shot wide. Brown looked like going through, but Turner applied the closure, and Reilly ran out and prevented Durrant from getting in his shot at what would have been a dangerous position. A lot of useful work was performed by the home right wing, and shot after shot was got away. Ten minutes from the end an unfortunate accident happened, which robbed Portsmouth of the services of Stringfellow. In a tussle in midfield he collided with one of the Luton players, and was so bad that he had to be assisted off the field by the club trainer. Play was resumed after a brief interval, and

Luton narrowly missed scoring, but offside play spoilt the effort. The home team retaliated, Cunliffe having a fine drive negotiated by Ord. Final score :

PORTSMOUTH, 1 ; LUTON, 0.

FOOTBALL FACTS AND FANCIES.

The outcome of the visit of the Luton team to Portsmouth was fairly satisfactory to those admirers of the side who stayed at home at ease. We had been warned that a heavy defeat must be expected, so that to escape with only one goal scored against them must be regarded as gratifying.

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So far as the reports in the London papers are concerned there is none that calls for consideration more loudly than that which appears in the *Morning Leader* over the signature of "The Waif." It is a remarkable concoction and gives the Lutonians an exceedingly bad character.

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Here is the opening paragraph: "Last season when Portsmouth visited Luton they complained bitterly of the tactics indulged in by several of the Strawplaiters' eleven, and on Saturday there was a repetition of those incidents, which cannot be too strongly condemned. From the very commencement the game was marred by foul play and unnecessary vigour, and scientific football was rarely ever attempted. I dare say there were offenders on both sides, but more than four-fifths of the free kicks were awarded to Portsmouth, and I should not like to say how many times the burly Lindsay came under the notice of the referee. As an exhibition Saturday's game was a failure, and the 9,000 spectators—the gate amounted to £265—must have been sadly disappointed. The solitary crumb of comfort was the result, which was the odd goal to nil in favour of Pompey."

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That reference to the conduct of the Lutonians last February revives a controversy which would have been better left alone. On that occasion the game was spoilt by the referee, and yet the Lutonians had vastly the best of the play. Here is what I had to say of that game: "I was disappointed by the methods of the visitors—or some of them. A clever set of players, as they undoubtedly are, have no need to indulge in foul play. There was plenty of it on Saturday. Some will call it, perhaps, 'a little vigorous.' I should think it was. We should have heard plenty about it had the Lutonians indulged in like tactics away from home." Yet, forsooth, we are now told that Portsmouth players "complained bitterly of the tactics" of certain Lutonians. Why, the boot was quite on the other leg.

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Writing a week later concerning the lucubrations of a correspondent in a London paper, I said: "So far as I was able to judge—and I speak from an experience extending over something like 20 years—the 'unsportsmanlike tactics' were adopted by the Portsmouth players rather than by the Lutonians. True, the referee felt called upon to remonstrate with individual Lutonians, but he either did not or would not see samples of equally vigorous play—if not more vigorous—on the part of the 'seasideers.'"

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I am at one with "The Waif" in thinking "these incidents" cannot be too strongly condemned. It is a question whether this person was present at the Luton match. Yet he accepts hearsay evidence and on the strength of it proceeds to besmirch the Lutonians, as though the Portsmouth men were angels and the Luton lot were quite the reverse. Such partiality is sickening.

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"The Waif," after the preliminary fling at the visitors over last season's match, alludes to the only point scored at Portsmouth on Saturday and continues: "This reverse seemed to have the effect of putting several of the Lutonians into a great rage. They never hesitated to bring a man down by fair means or foul, and I should not be going too far if I were to say at once that practically for the remainder of the game the referee's duty consisted of making a selection of the least constituted rough and foul play. Mr. Gilroy's silence on Saturday must have been the means of enabling him several of the latest tricks resorted to by certain unscrupulous players."