



SOUTHERN LEAGUE.

LUTON TOWN v. PORTSMOUTH.

A FINE VICTORY FOR LUTON ENDS THE SEASON.

The visit of the League champions to Luton on Saturday had been eagerly anticipated, and as it was the last match of the season, additional interest was attached to the fixture. There had been a rumour that Portsmouth were going to play a reserve eleven, but it proved to be untrue, as, with the exception of Marshall and Chadwick, the visitors turned out at full strength, the vacant places being filled by two well-known Clapton amateurs, Meczniowski and Langhorne, both of whom gave a good account of themselves.

The home team were also at full strength, with the exception that Moody and R. Hawkes played vice Brown and Williams. The weather was fine, although a strong wind blew down the ground. To augment the funds of the Club, a shilling was charged for admission, but there was a fairly large crowd of some 1,500 spectators present. The referee, Mr. J. Stark, of London, began the game with:

Luton: Ord; Lindsay and Sharp; F. Hawkes, White, and R. Hawkes; Durrant, Blessington, Moody, Tierney and Colvin.

Portsmouth: Reilly; Burgess and Blythe; Langhorne, Stringfellow, and Meczniowski; Cunliffe, W. Smith, McDonald, S. Smith and Wilkie.

Portsmouth won the toss, and Luton opened the game. Durrant forced a futile corner in the first minute, while two more efforts by the same player went behind. After several attempts, the home forwards got down in fine style, and some effective play by Moody resulted in Durrant beating Reilly with a good shot, thus giving Luton the lead after 10 minutes' play. A foul against Tierney was cleared, and a fine effort by Cunliffe at the other end went behind. Luton forced two fruitless corners, and Tierney netted, but "hands" nullified the point, while Burgess cleared grandly from R. Hawkes.

The play of the locals up to this period had given great satisfaction to their supporters. The Portsmouth men seldom crossed the half-way line. Durrant forced Reilly to give a corner with a lightning shot, which was cleared, and Cunliffe shot behind at the other end. Luton forced three more corners, but try how they would they could not increase their lead before the interval, which arrived with the score:

Luton 1 goal, Portsmouth 0.

During the interval, a collection was made for the widows and children of those who were killed in the disaster at Ibrox Park, Glasgow, three weeks ago. The Red Cross Band meanwhile discoursed some sweet music, and also before the match commenced, which was greatly appreciated by all present.

On resuming, the visitors got away, but they were beaten back, and Tierney and Colvin each made a good effort to break through, but Reilly saved on each occasion. The visitors got away again, and taking advantage of a lull in the home defence, Meczniowski beat Ord with a very soft shot, the latter letting the ball slip out of his hands into the net. This reverse livened up the game considerably, and Luton played as if determined to win. The home side forced a corner, and Hawkes got in a grand shot, which Reilly saved, but before he could clear, Durrant gave Luton the lead with a fine shot, which caused great rejoicing among the spectators.

From the kick-off, Luton were again attacking, and forced three corners, all of which proved futile, and Reilly saved grandly from Moody on two occasions, while he was severely tested by Blessington. Lindsay gave Portsmouth their first corner, which, however, was cleared by White, and hesitation by Tierney lost a golden opportunity of increasing Luton's lead. From now to the finish, play was chiefly confined to mid-field, and no more scoring being done, the end came:

Luton, 2 goals; Portsmouth 1.

NOTES.

This game was a fitting conclusion to a fairly successful season, and Luton are to be congratulated on the fine display given by them and this victory secured over the League champions, who had only lost 2 matches before Saturday. The game was full of interest from start to finish. Luton held the upper hand all through. The visitors, however, struck one as being a very clever combination and one that is a credit to the South. It is not often that a club can carry off the championship of two Leagues in one season, for besides the Southern League, the Portsmouth eleven have annexed the Western League championship.

Ord, in goal, was never tested, and it was a mistake on his part that gave the visitors their point; indeed, it was the only shot that he had to deal with. Lindsay and Sharp both played soundly, and never gave the opposing forwards much scope for danger. Sharp especially put in some fine tackling, and stopped the clever visiting right time after time.

In the middle trio, all worked very hard, and it would be difficult to award the palm, but, I think that for individual cleverness and tackling, Bob Hawkes was most conspicuous. White was indefatigable in his tackling and was always in the thick of it, while F. Hawkes played a cool and resourceful game, and repeatedly got the better of his wing. As a line they would compare very favourably with most of those in the South.

In the forwards, Durrant was easily the pick, and throughout played splendidly, his runs being quite a feature of the match. His two goals were beautiful efforts, and it is a pity he could not have shown the same form earlier in the season. Blessington was clever, while Moody, although working very hard, was not such a success in the centre as on his previous appearance. Tierney spoilt his display by too much individualism, while Colvin made one or two good runs, but waited too long before centring, and consequently good opportunities were lost.

As to the visitors, Reilly, the old Irish International, played a grand game in goal, and he certainly saved his side from a much heavier defeat. Time after time he cleared when he appeared certain to be beaten, and his strong kicking was admired by all. He was well assisted by his backs, Burgess especially showing fine defensive prowess.

In the middle line, Stringfellow played strongly. The two Clapton amateurs acquitted themselves capitally. They should prove valuable acquisitions to the Portsmouth eleven in time of emergency. The forwards were rather at sea owing to alterations and other causes, and consequently did not do themselves justice.

McDonald in the centre was not at his best, and found White a formidable opponent. On the extreme right, Cunliffe played very cleverly, although he was not given much opportunity to show, while his partner, W. Smith, was only fair. His namesake on the other wing worked hard, but as he had to play practically by himself, could not get on much, since Wilkie, who usually plays at back, was a mere passenger, and was limping during most of the game. Thus falls the curtain on season 1901-02, which has been, both from a playing and financial point of view, decidedly the best the Club has known for several years.