

FOOTBALL

LUTON TOWN v. PORTSMOUTH.

VICTORY FOR THE "BLUES."

During the last month of the season the Luton players have created surprise after surprise, and their admirers became used to extraordinary performances. To draw at Tottenham and Reading in Southern League games was regarded as extremely satisfactory. But on Saturday the "blues" went one better and secured a thoroughly well-deserved victory at the expense of the champions of the League. This formed a fitting wind-up for what has been on the whole a good season for the Lutonians and there was justifiable jubilation amongst the spectators. It is but fair to say that the Portsmouth team was not so fully representative as was that of Luton, and so mediocre was the display given by the visitors in the early part of the game that a shifting about of the players was made. The Luton directors, in concurrence with a desire expressed at a recent meeting of supporters of the club, raised the charge for admission to a shilling, and this evidently had the effect of keeping away many who would otherwise have been present, for the "gate" was not nearly so good as it might fairly have been expected to be. The weather was perfect, save that the wind was a trifle strong.

Teams:—

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

Portsmouth: Reilly; Burgess and Wilkie (capt.); Blyth, Stringfellow and Langhorne; Marshall, W. Smith, McDonald, S. Smith and Mecznikowski.

Referee, Mr. J. Stark.

Portsmouth won the toss and faced the sun. The home team went off in splendid style and the enthusiasm of the onlookers was soon aroused by the determination which their favourites infused into their effort. Early in the game Durrant forced a corner with a fine centre. Reilly cleared well from the flag-side. The "blues" were soon busy again, however, and once more Durrant brought trouble to Reilly. The ex-soldier was in first-rate form, though, and effected a clever clearance. Then the Luton outside right shot yards over the bar. The play was very fast, and with the visitors acting mainly on the defensive the home lot were displaying to considerable advantage. Following a tricky display by Colvin, R. Hawkes sent up prettily and the Portsmouth goalie was forced to bestir himself once more. "Pompey" later on went away through the medium of W. Smith; but little headway was made, for the home defenders were on the alert, and the ball was rapidly returned into the visitors' quarters. Durrant terminated a neat run by shooting erratically. He atoned for this immediately afterwards, for he concluded a fine exhibition by scoring a magnificent goal, Reilly having no chance whatever. This success fell to the locals ten minutes from the start, and it necessarily had the effect of stimulating them to renewed efforts. It need scarcely be said that the score was enthusiastically cheered by the crowd. The Portsmouth outside right effected a change in the order of the play by beating R. Hawkes very cleverly. He wound up by sending into the side of the net—the outside. Durrant again became troublesome, a shot from his foot leading to the concession of a corner by the visiting custodian. This proved ineffectual, as did a similar point produced in like manner just after. There was a great shout when Tierney ran the ball through and managed to get it past Reilly. He handled it at the crucial moment, however, and so the score was not allowed. The game had up to now been pleasantly free from fouls, and the visitors were first to offend. Sharp handled the ball when the strangers were attacking, and from the free kick it was headed over. Another corner to Luton was unfruitful, and a capital long shot by R. Hawkes was unsuccessful. Colvin, who was playing in very good style, was warmly cheered for an especially pretty exhibition. Reilly brought off a marvellous save from a hot one by Durrant, the ball being hooked out from under the bar at the cost of a corner. R. Hawkes terminated a strong attack by sending wide. The latter portion of the first-half saw several corners secured by Luton. None of these, however, was productive, and eventually the interval arrived with the score standing thus:

LUTON, 1; PORTSMOUTH, 0.

In the second half the local players continued to play in capital style. As the result of a hot attack at an early period Reilly had to handle, and Tierney followed this up by sending in well, Colvin afterwards hitting the side of the net with a good one. The visitors equalised shortly after through the medium of Mecznikowski, the ball bumping so curiously as apparently to deceive Ord completely. Otherwise it is difficult to explain his failure to stop the ball, for the shot was a very soft one. A foul against the seashiders close to goal looked ominous and Lindsay sent up splendidly. Reilly cleared well, however. A corner to Luton was unfruitful. Just afterwards R. Hawkes sent up splendidly and Durrant crashed the ball into the net when Reilly had only partially cleared. This renewed success was received with delight by the spectators. Durrant was the hero of the hour, and the crowd applauded enthusiastically when he indulged in another excellent run a little later on. A corner followed and Moody forced another at a subsequent stage. A splendid shot by Blessington was brilliantly saved. Towards the end Portsmouth secured a corner, though without tangible result. There was no more scoring, however, and in the end the locals ought off a splendid win with these figures:

LUTON, 2; PORTSMOUTH, 1.

FOOTBALL FACTS AND FANCIES.

Those who prophesied an easy victory for the champions of the Southern League at Luton on Saturday were agreeably surprised by the outcome of the encounter. The "blues" rose to the occasion in a way that they have recently proved themselves capable of doing and won in first-rate style.

★

Apart altogether from the fact that they were not fully represented, the Portsmouthians did not appear to me to take the fixture very seriously, and certainly the form they displayed was not worthy of the League leaders.

★

It is true that in the second portion of the game the seashiders displayed far better style than before the interval, but at their best they were assuredly not superior to the locals. How, then, explain it?

★

Nobody would grudge the "blues" a whit of the credit of such a splendid victory. They were unflagging throughout, and they played remarkably good football too. The forwards were remarkably aggressive.

★

Had it not been that Reilly was on his best behaviour "Pompey" would have had a far heavier score piled up. On one occasion the custodian hooked the ball out when a score seemed inevitable, and at other times he was simply unbeatable.

★

Ord, on the other hand, seemed to completely misjudge the ball when the Portsmouth goal was obtained. The ground was hard, and the ball bumped in a very curious way. Perhaps that is the explanation of an apparently weak display.

★

The particular hero of the game was Durrant, whose play on the extreme right was worthy of any team. Not only did he notch both goals, but he was persistent in his attacks and was invariably dangerous when within shooting range. He gave Reilly plenty of chances of distinguishing himself.

★

Blessington played well, too, and he fed his wing-mate extremely well. By the way, the inside right has become very stout recently; but the superabundant adipose tissue does not appear to handicap him in his efforts.

★

Colvin was a rare handful for Burgess, and time after time he managed to break away and centre. Tierney was a consistently hard worker, and Moody performed very well indeed.

★

The halves were in grand form. R. Hawkes was the most conspicuous of the trio, but he was not very much the superior of his companions, who were in great form. The "Pompey" forwards were held in check very cleverly.

★

The backs played finely and, save for the mistake already mentioned, Ord acquitted himself satisfactorily.

★

Reilly and Burgess were the most conspicuous players on the Portsmouth side. The halves played a moderately good game; but I was disappointed with the forwards.

★