

Luton Town Football Club.

SOUTHERN LEAGUE.

LUTON v. PORTSMOUTH.

A DISAPPOINTING DEFEAT.--LINDSAY ORDERED OFF.

It was rather a tall order for the opening League fixture of the season to ask Luton to visit the champions at Portsmouth on Saturday. Yet the Luton men hoped to give the Portsmouth Club a close game. Last season, Luton only lost by 1-0 at Fratton Park, while in the return, Luton gained a fine victory by 2-1.

Both teams had their best elevens in the field. Portsmouth were short of Arthur Charwick, but Stringfellow took his place, while in the Luton eleven, Bob Hawkes played instead of Harry Williams. Beautiful weather prevailed for the match, the sun shinning brilliantly throughout. There was a large crowd present, fully 9,000 spectators lining the ropes when the teams took the field. Punctual to time, the referee, Mr. A. Farrant, whistled the following 22 into order.

Portsmouth: Reilly; Burgess and Wilkie; Blythe, Stringfellow and Houlker; Marshall, Cuncliffe, Brown, W. Smith and S. Smith.

Luton: Frail; Lindsay and Sharp; F. Hawkes, White, R. Hawkes; Durrant, Blessington, Moody, Gall and Allsopp.

Burgess won the toss for the locals and Portsmouth had the advantage of a slight wind, Luton having to play facing the sun. The home players soon showed superiority, and the Luton backs had plenty to do. Bob Hawkes tried a capital shot, which Reilly saved, and Durrant put through when standing offside.

Over half-an-hour went by without any score. As the game went on Luton improved, and for the next few minutes they had a fair share of the play. From a centre by Allsopp, Blessington had a rare chance of getting in a shot, but he made a poor attempt.

Some exciting play resulted in Portsmouth scoring 3 goals. After 32 minutes had passed, Brown gave Cuncliffe a clever pass, and the Pompey inside right opened the scoring with a shot that went through the far corner of the goal. Hardly had the game been restarted when Marshall centred right across the goal mouth, and Brown allowing the ball to go to Billy Smith, the latter beat Frail with a hard shot at short range. From the kick-off Pompey returned to the attack, and in less than two minutes Marshall had again passed judiciously to Steve Smith, who registered a third goal with a shot that gave the goalkeeper no chance.

Luton struggled gamely, and after Moody had shot wide, Reilly had to stop a dangerous shot from White. Towards half-time, Portsmouth forced two corners and Burgess was compelled to kick out to stop Durrant. The score at the interval was:—

Portsmouth 3, Luton 0.

In the second half, an unpleasant incident occurred, of which the "Portsmouth Football Mail" says:—"Steve Smith had obtained possession and cleverly tricked Lindsay, but the Luton back deliberately kicked his legs from under him. Steve Smith dropped like a stone, and to the accompaniment of loud groans and hooting, Lindsay was ordered off the field."

A delay of 3 minutes followed while S. Smith was being attended to by the trainer, but he had been too severely injured by the Luton captain to be able to resume his place on the field. The visitors resorted to the one back game, and as a result the home forwards were frequently off-side. F. Hawkes was cautioned for a dangerous foul on Brown, and White was similarly penalised immediately afterwards.

A tremendous cheer greeted the re-appearance of S. Smith at the end of 13 minutes' play. Cunliffe got going again, and Frail just managed to fist away a hard shot from him.

The game continued to go in Portsmouth's favour, and from a pass by Billy Smith, Steve Smith sprinted clean down the field before sending in a shot which the goal keeper cleared, Reilly experienced no difficulty in negotiating shots from Gall and Moody, but just previously the Pompey goal had had a narrow escape during a scrimmage.

For a few minutes the visitors did all the attacking, the Pompey forwards being unable to get together owing to the tactics employed by their opponents. Offside was continually being appealed for, and the claims were often allowed. In the closing stages there was very little in the play to interest the spectators beyond the clever and tricky dodging of Reilly, whose bouncing of the ball before clearing greatly amused the gallery. There was no further scoring, and the result was :—

Portsmouth 3 goals, Luton nil.

NOTES.

I am sorry that Luton's first League match away was spoilt by the roughness and fouling of certain players. The Portsmouth "Mail" says :—“The ordering off of Lindsay will probably mean a severe punishment from the F.A., as this is not the first time he has been similarly treated by a referee. His offence was most glaring; there can be no doubt that he deliberately kicked his opponent. Fortunately, Steve Smith was not injured so seriously as was at first supposed.”

The other Southern League matches resulted as under : Southampton inflicted a heavy defeat on Brentford of 6 goals to nil, at the Dell ; Tottenham and Queen's Park Rangers played a drawn game at Gilpin Park, neither side scoring ; West Ham and Reading also played a drawn game of 1 each at Canning Town ; New Brompton just defeated Kettering on the Kent enclosure by 1 goal to nil ; Swindon created a surprise by defeating Millwall by 3 goals to 2 at Swindon ; while Bristol Rovers were the only team to gain a victory away from home, defeating Northampton on their own ground by 2 goals to 1.

To-morrow Luton are at home for the first time this season in the Southern League when they entertain New Brompton. The Kentishers have got a very smart eleven together, including an old friend, Daw, who is keeping goal for Brompton this season. Given fine weather a large crowd should turn up to give them a hearty welcome and a good game ought to result in a win for Luton.