

Luton Town Football Club.

SOUTHERN LEAGUE.

LUTON TOWN v. PORTSMOUTH.

A DISAPPOINTING DEFEAT.

The visit of the League champions to Luton on Saturday had been eagerly awaited by the supporters of the home club, and with the Town team just now showing their best form there was every prospect of a fine game. Up-to-date, the Portsmouth eleven have only been defeated once this season—by Northampton on their own ground by 1-0, and came to Luton with the full expectation of gaining another victory. Luton lost at Portsmouth by 3 goals to nil in the first match of the season.

Owing to misconduct, and other causes, Sharp and Hilsdon have been suspended, and consequently Luton could not muster full strength. Williams and Gall were included and Wood took Allsopp's place. Portsmouth played their strongest eleven, including the Internationals Chadwick and Houlker. The directors charged a shilling for admission, but a large number had bought tickets beforehand at 6d. A large crowd of 3,000 spectators lined the ropes in fine but dull weather. The Red Cross Band played on the grounds and the referee was Mr. J. W. Bailey, of Leicester. The teams were:

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

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

Luton won the toss, and had a strong wind in their favour. The opening exchanges, however, were in favour of the visitors, but Luton soon warmed to the work. Reilly had to save from Durrant, while at the other end Frail fisted away from W. Smith. Soon Durrant scored a lovely goal, only to have it disallowed for offside, much to the chagrin of the crowd. Luton again attacked and Durrant and White both shot behind, while Stringfellow robbed Woods just as he was getting dangerous. Portsmouth forced the first corner, and Chadwick neatly robbed Durrant, while Lindsay cleverly stopped the Portsmouth left wing twice in succession.

Woods forced Reilly to save, and Wilkie cleared a fine effort by Blessington, while a moment later the same player headed behind. Luton forced another futile corner. Houlker cleared a fine effort by Bob Hawkes, while Reilly saved a grand shot from White, and then yielded a corner to Durrant. Just before the interval Reilly got hurt, but he was able to resume after having his head bandaged. At half-time, there was no score.

On resuming, hesitation by Gall lost a good opportunity, and Chadwick headed away a fine centre from Durrant. Portsmouth forced a corner but Frail saved. Directly afterwards from a foul against Luton, Brown headed Portsmouth's first goal after 12 minutes' play. Durrant was given offside just by the post, and a foul on Frail nullified an attack by the visitors. A foul was given against Portsmouth, and the excitement reached such a pitch that the referee called the players together and warned them against rough play.

After this the visitors broke away and Brown, beating Lindsay, ran through and easily scored No. 2. Luton tried hard to get on terms, but Portsmouth defended grandly. Luton forced two futile corners, and Brown had to leave for repairs, but he soon resumed. The game became very difficult to follow owing to darkness, and although the referee consulted the linesmen twice, he decided to finish the match. Play was confined chiefly to mid-field, and Luton gained an offside point. The game ended:

Portsmouth 2 goals, Luton 0.

NOTES.

The game was a fast and hard tussle all through and every inch of the ground was contested by both elevens. On the day's play, I think that Portsmouth were slightly the better team and deserved their victory, though Luton should have had at least one goal. There was a deal too much petty fouling among the players, and this to some extent marred what was otherwise a pleasant game. The visitors are a very powerful combination, and are decidedly the best team that has visited Luton so far this season.

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Taking Portsmouth first, Reilly did what little he had to do in his best style. His injury was worse than was anticipated, and it was lucky that it did not prove fatal, as an artery was severed at the back of the ear. It was due to the excellent defence of the backs that "proud Pompey" could claim the honours of the day. Their strong kicking was a feature of the match, and their tackling and weight were too much for the home forwards.

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Among the halves, the old Southampton man, Chadwick, played splendidly, and held Gall very close indeed. Against the Luton right wing, Houliker did very creditably, while Stringfellow also showed up well, but was not quite so finished in his methods as were his partners.

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In the front rank, Brown, late of Tottenham, was in fine form, despite the close attention of White. His two goals were skilful efforts, and would have done credit to any player. He was unlucky in getting lamed just before the close by an accidental kick. The brothers Smith on the left exhibited some pretty football together, but found just as much as they could manage in F. Hawkes and Lindsay. Marshall and Cunliffe showed combination that was a treat to witness. Altogether, Portsmouth are a splendid eleven, and should go a long way in the coming Cup-ties.

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Luton are to be congratulated on making such a gallant fight against their doughty opponents, but luck was dead against them all through. Frail was reliable in goal, although he was not severely tested, and he had no chance of saving either points. Lindsay played a grand defensive game, and was never wanting in any respect. Williams also did much sound work, and tackled fearlessly. It is a credit to Harry that he should be filling the place of Sharp so effectively.

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In the middle line, all three worked like Trojans, and it would be difficult to individualise. I thought, however, that at one time Bob Hawkes tried to do a little too much on his

own, when a pass would have been a little advantageous to his side. Still, when all did so well it is ungrateful to find fault, especially with a local lad.

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As to the Luton forwards, Galt was a failure in the centre, was also very slow, and I do not think that he got one shot in at Reilly all through the match. Blessington and Durrant played their usual clever game, but they found a very warm defence opposed to them, and consequently were not so effective as they have been. On the left wing, Moody was only fair, Woods made a very good show, but the superior weight of the Portsmouth men was against him, and he could not do himself justice. Nevertheless, he has the making of a capable player, and only needs proper training to bring him out.

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The referee was fair on the whole, although he did not give much satisfaction to the crowd. During the game, the spectators shouted some very bad remarks at the referee, and even allowing for excitement, I think they were entirely uncalled for. It was amusing to see the crowd on the terraces with lighted matches and burning paper owing to the bad light.

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To-morrow (Christmas Day) Luton have to journey to Kettering to play a friendly, and on Boxing Day, Northampton come here for their League fixture. New Brompton will be visited on Saturday. On the Town ground, the Reserves will entertain Luton Clarence in the Beds. and District League, and Tottenham Hotspur in the South Eastern League on Christmas Day and Saturday, respectively.