

The Southern League.

PLYMOUTH ARGYLE v. LUTON.

Played at Home Park, Plymouth, on Saturday. Result:—

Luton	nil.
Plymouth Argyle	nil.

The teams were as follow:—

Luton—Thompson; Bennett and McEwen; F. Hawkes, White, and Holdstock; Durrant, Eaton, McKee, Storey, and Allsopp.

Plymouth—Robinson; Goodall and A. Clark; Leech, C. Clark, and Digweed; Dalrymple, Anderson, Peddie, Picken, and Jack.

Referee, Mr. H. Morgan (Glamorgan); linesmen, Messrs. W. B. Wilkinson (Bodmin) and J. Dicks (Oreston).

With the exception of Bob Hawkes, the best side was available to make the long journey west. It was left until Friday morning to finally decide if Bob's shoulder was equal to the task, but after giving it a trial on Thursday, he decided not to play, because he felt under the circumstances he might be a source of weakness rather than strength to the team. In addition to the names given above, Williams was also taken down, the final composition of the team being left in the hands of the officials present on the morning of the match. White, as recorded last week, was sent on in advance, and the Secretary received a note from him on Friday morning giving the welcome information that he felt equal to taking his place in the team.

The players left Luton by the 12.30 train to St. Pancras and joined the three o'clock express from Peckington. They were all in excellent spirits; indeed, I feel certain the chief reason of their successes to date is the good feeling obtaining between them, from McEwen downwards. Mac apparently has almost shaken off his ailment, and everyone hopes the recovery is permanent. Two stops only were made on the journey down, Exeter, 194 miles from London, being the first. Plymouth was reached by 8.15, and the players were by no means sorry to leave the iron horse.

White was at the station to welcome his comrades, and expressed himself as glad to see them again, it being rather lonely stopping in a strange town. Mr. Brettel, the Argyle secretary, also did his best to make the players at home, and quickly hurried them along to the hotel, as it was raining hard.

One feature in particular all through the stay in Plymouth was the kind way the team were treated both by officials and players. In connection with the Argyle Club a social institution is run, and the team were made free of the place right away. I am sure our players appreciated the kindness, and will do their best to retaliate (I think that is the proper word just at present) when the Plymouth team visit Luton. On Saturday morning the majority went for a stroll upon the famous Hoe before breakfast, and thoroughly enjoyed themselves.

Immediately after their morning meal, a visit was paid to the Garrison Artillery Barracks and School of Gunnery, at the invitation of Capt. Windrum, one of the Plymouth directors. The whole morning was spent in this way, for the officers and men spared no pains in explaining the working of the most recent engines of warfare. Some of the party tried their hands at target practice with the latest machine guns—with what amount of success I will not state.

I could spin out another column with interesting items of this kind, but after all the "play's the thing," and I must get to that. The new Southern League Club's ground is quite up-to-date, with good stand accommodation, although if they get larger crowds than on Saturday some banking must be done on one side of the pitch. The crowd present was estimated to number 12,000, and was the largest gate of the season. I learned that on Wednesday they had 8,000 present, so that the Association game has come to stop in Plymouth without a doubt.

McEwen won the toss—I was almost saying as usual, for he has had wonderfully good luck in this particular. The first item of interest was a good attempt by Holdstock, which gave Robinson some trouble, as several of the Luton forwards were practically on top of him, but the old Saint ultimately got it away. At the opposite end Jack put across a fine centre, which Picken attempted to convert, but Thompson punted away in fine style. It was evident the game was to be of a ding-dong nature, and although contested with the best of good feeling, no quarter was to be allowed either side.

The play was principally on the left wing of Plymouth, for whenever the other players received the ball they at once gave it a drive over to Jack or Picken, and those players certainly upheld their reputation as the finest left wing in the League. These tactics did not turn out so disastrously for Luton as they might have done, because Durrant, who, of course, was usually somewhere in this vicinity, was enabled to show

himself to good account whenever he reached the ball. Allsopp and Picken respectively failed to take advantage of mistakes by the opposing backs by shooting wildly.

The home left wing got the better of an encounter with Bennett, and Jack looked all over a scorer, when McEwen rushed across in the nick of time and breasted out at the expense of a corner. It was a fine save on the part of McEwen, and the crowd cheered heartily. Just after, Bennett neatly robbed the Plymouth front rank, and taking the ball through, punted it nicely to McKee. The centre man passed across to Storey, who put in a hot shot, Robinson just tipping over the bar. This really deserved to score, and was well worked for.

About this time the referee seemed to get flustered, and scarcely knew what to do until an appreciable time had elapsed. He allowed Allsopp to settle on the ball while in a palpably offside position, and Tommy put in a fine shot just over the bar. On the advice of his lines man, he then gave offside against Luton, and brought the ball back to the place where Allsopp touched it. This was only one of the many mistakes Mr. Morgan made, and the players were often quite unable to judge what the whistle went for.

A bit later Durrant made the finest run of the match; I should think he must have taken the ball seventy yards, for he was well in the Luton half when he secured. Jack was tackled by his half-back, but he beat him in pace, and racing down by the touch-line he slung the ball across to Allsopp, who had only Robinson to beat, but Tommy could not quite stop himself, and taking a rather wild kick, put it well over the bar. Undoubtedly Durrant's run deserved a better fate, for he had got clean through, and I am sure no one regretted the miss more than Allsopp.

From a place kick twenty yards out, Bennett caused Robinson to handle, but the Plymouth custodian was not to be caught napping and got it away. Just here Luton were having much the better of the game, and a nicely-placed corner by Allsopp looked very nearly doing the trick, but one of the home players kicked behind, and Allsopp had another chance to drop into goal-mouth. This time he did not place to such advantage. Luton keeping up the pressure, Robinson was on the alert for several minutes, but ultimately he effected a clearance, to the evident relief of the crowd, who were rather fidgety hereabouts. Jack at the opposite end tested Thompson after a good run, but half-time was called with the score-sheet blank.

Soon after the re-start Storey was badly fouled, but Mr. Morgan took no notice, although it was well in the penalty area. Clark, the Plymouth left back, retired for ten minutes, and Goodall was left in sole charge at full back. A nice combined movement by the whole Luton front string ended in Allsopp just missing the goal. In this instance it was a fine attempt on Allsopp's part, and fully deserved to score.

From a Luton standpoint, the referee a minute later made an awful error in disallowing a goal by McKee. The situation arose in this way. One of the Luton halves kicked the ball well up towards Goodall, who was standing near the centre line, as the Argyle men were crossing at the moment. McKee rushed up the field to take the ball; Goodall got to it, but could not get it away, and it rebounded to McKee. Naturally, as the Luton player was facing his opponents' goal, he was in a better position to get away, and he passed Goodall before that worthy could turn round. With a clear fifty yards' run into goal, McKee kept the ball well under control, and Robinson ran out with the object of making him shoot at long range. But Mac was not to be caught, and waited until Robinson was some two yards away before taking aim. By this time Robinson was nearly twenty yards out of goal, and he had the mortification of seeing the ball travel slowly into the net.

McKee's band was almost shaken off by his comrades, and no one that I heard questioned the fact that it was a goal. Indeed, both sides were making tracks for the centre of the field when, to the delight of the Plymouth players, the referee placed the ball somewhere near the extreme of the centre circle and announced it was offside. Even if it be conceded that McKee was offside when he got the ball, surely it was out of all reason to allow the play to go on for the length of time Mr. Morgan did on Saturday before giving his decision.

Again Storey was fouled inside the penalty area, but no penalty kick was given. I learned after the match that Mr. Morgan told one of the Luton players he gave Storey a chance to

score instead of awarding a penalty, but how Storey could be said to have a chance passes my comprehension, as he was lying on the ground with an injured knee.

Towards the close McEwen played a purely defensive game to retain the unbeaten certificate, and the end so far justified the means, for there is no knowing what might have happened if the Plymouth forwards were given sufficient rope. As it was the final whistle went with the score unaltered, and Luton had taken the first point from Plymouth at Home Park.

Thompson again did wonderfully well in goal, keeping out several teasers, especially from Picken. Bennett and McEwen worked together all through the piece, keeping one of the finest forward lines in the League at bay for the hour and a half. Undoubtedly Bob Hawkes was missed in the middle line, but Holdstock, in his initial serious match for two seasons, did not do badly, especially as he was playing out of his proper position. He used his head to great advantage several times, and with a course of training will quickly get himself round again. Lutonians know what that means, for when he broke down he gave promise of making one of the finest half-backs in the South. White stuck to Peddie in his well-known style, and thus frustrated the ex-Newcastle's centre's efforts to break through time after time. Freddy Hawkes had the toughest task in tackling Picken and Jack, and he did well to prevent them scoring.

Forward, Durrant was most prominent, and he was voted the best outside right seen in the west country. Eaton did not perhaps show up to the same extent because he played an unselfish game, but of course Durrant could not have performed so finely if he had not received good support from his partner. McKee played his best game of the season, and is to be sympathised with in having a really fine dashing goal negatived as mentioned above.

In the Plymouth evening journal on Friday night, the advice was given to watch Storey, and it was certainly carried out, for he came in for most attention in the fouling line. Still, on the whole he played a clever game, and the fact that he was brought down illegally at least three times when in a good position to score proves he worked hard to get in his usual goal. Allsopp did not have the best of luck with his shots, two or three of which deserved a better fate.

Plymouth have got together a much better team than was generally thought when the names appeared during the close season. Of course every one admitted in looking Robinson they had made a capture, but the rest of the side were put down as average players. On Saturday Robinson played up to his reputation, but the surprise packet to my mind was Archie Goodall at right full back. He quite outshone his partner, and was very difficult to beat. In Leech, Clarke, and Digweed, three servicable halves have been secured.

Undoubtedly it is in attack that Plymouth are to be congratulated, for they possess the finest line of forwards I have seen this season. Jack, who will be remembered as playing a great game for Bolton Wanderers in that memorable cup tie a few years since, keeps up his form wonderfully, while Picken, his partner, is not far removed from being the best forward in the South. Peddie is known as a wonderful centre when in the mood, and he worked his hardest on Saturday. The right wing pair were not given much chance to distinguish themselves, but they are not to be despised.