

The Southern League.

LUTON v. PLYMOUTH ARGYLE

Played at Luton on Saturday. Result:—

Plymouth Argyle	2 goals.
Luton	nil.

The teams were as follow:—

Luton—Lindsay; Turner and McEwen; F. Hawkes, White, and R. Hawkes; Eaton, Ross, Lamberton, Moody, and Barnes.

Plymouth—Horne; Saul and A. Clarke; Leech, C. Clarke, and Banks; Dalrymple, Buck, Picken, Wright, and Jack.

Referee, Mr. J. C. Tilletson.

For this, the last of the Southern League home fixtures for some time, the Luton directors again had the satisfaction of seeing a fine afternoon, but the attendance at the start looked anything but promising. Later on, however, the people flocked in, and the spectators ultimately numbered between four and five thousand, a little more than £80 being taken at the gate.

But though the weather was fine the conditions were not favourable to football, the ground being very hard, rusty, and a bit slippery, the players as a consequence having considerable difficulty in maintaining a firm footing and more difficulty still in controlling the ball.

The visitors, who set the ball rolling towards the Bury Farm end, got away at the outset, and Picken sent in a long shot which Lindsay easily cleared. Then a grand run by Lamberton and Eaton transferred the play, and Barnes forced a corner, from which Moody headed behind. Fred Hawkes next put just over the bar, and then another corner fell to the homesters, but from Eaton's kick, Ross shot wide.

The homesters kept up the pressure, however, and a fine shot by Barnes resulted in a third corner, and after Barnes had placed, Bob Hawkes dropped the ball in the mouth of goal and a fairly warm time ensued, but ultimately Plymouth succeeded in effecting a clearance. McEwen afterwards took a free kick for hands, and Ross headed in beautifully, Horne having great trouble in negotiating and only just managing to do it by tipping the ball over the bar.

This, the fourth corner, was placed by Barnes, but it was of no avail, Moody heading wide. As a Plymouth visitor observed, Luton were all over their opponents, though unfortunately their efforts met with no tangible reward. A great shot by Ross deserved to score, but it rebounded off one of the defenders who had the good luck to be in the way, and Eaton then sent behind. The Luton right-wingers next earned applause for a fine bit of play, the result of which was to give Ross an open goal, but the inside man, who is usually such a deadly shot, disappointed expectations by sending wide of the mark.

In another attack, Lamberton was fouled just outside the penalty line, but nothing came of the free kick, and then Saul was loudly hooted for two bad fouls on Barnes. After this, play became of a rather more open character, but considering the dash shown by the visitors, the surprising thing was that they did not have more of the game.

Luton forced another corner from a free kick, and from a centre by Eaton, Moody once more sent a little wide, while a little later Horne had to clear from a long shot by Eaton. Then, after all this play, in which, so far as aggressive work was concerned, there had been only one team in it, the Argyle got away, Dalrymple centred, and Picken netted the ball with a very smart shot.

The goal was splendidly got, but from the Luton point of view it was simply heart-breaking. The homesters, nevertheless, made gallant attempts to get on terms before the interval, but were not successful, and the Pilgrims crossed over with a very undeserved lead. On the play, Luton ought to have been well in front, though it cannot be said that their shooting had been of a very dangerous character, Ross especially being quite off song in this department.

The second half opened a little in the visitors' favour, but Luton were soon on the go again, and the Plymouth defence was pretty severely tested. Both backs and halfbacks, however, played in dashing style, and frustrated all the efforts of the homesters. Then once again Plymouth broke away, and from another centre by Dalrymple, Wright scored a second goal, this point coming quite as unexpectedly as the first had done.

Discouraged as they must have been, Luton still tried hard to improve their position, and White had the bad luck to hit the bar with a shot that deserved a goal all the way. Barnes next sent the wrong side of the net, and from a free kick, Bob Hawkes put in a tremendous drive, but it was all to no effect. Then Luton forced a couple of corners, the second being given by Horne to a header from Moody, and afterwards a beautiful centre by Barnes, right across the mouth of goal, raised the hopes of the spectators, but A. Clarke just saved the situation by kicking out.

Later on, the game opened out, the visitors going for all they were worth, but once or twice the homesters had very hard lines in not scoring. This was especially the case when Moody dashed in and netted the ball from a centre by Ross, but he was just offside, and the point was disallowed. A little before the finish the visitors made a smart run, and from a middle by Jack, Picken had the goal at his mercy, but shot high over the bar.

On the run of the play all through, Plymouth would probably be ready to admit that their victory was an exceedingly lucky one. In the first half, the breakaway from which they scored their goal was the only time they were at all dangerous. Four-fifths of the play took place on Plymouth territory, and yet Luton could not score.

The real reason of Luton's non-success was that they did not adapt themselves to circumstances. They overplayed their opponents, but the latter in defence were very resolute, and were always ready to dash in and clear when an opportunity presented itself. In fact, the clean, dashing work of the Plymouth backs and halves was one of the features of the game.

Against an opposition of this sort, the Luton forwards should surely have played as open a game as possible, but instead of that the men on both wings cuddled the ball and were foiled again and again, when the exercise of a little more judgment might have carried them through.

It was a pleasant surprise to find Lamberton's knee standing the strain, and he played a very fair game, some of his long passes to Eaton being cleverly done. Ross, however, was considerably below par, and it is a question whether the right wing suits him as well as the left. Moody's heading at times was splendid, and Barnes and Eaton gave a very good account of themselves, though they were both inclined to put their centres to the goalkeeper instead of to the other forwards.

The halves did some very good work, White being particularly smart in his tackling, but being unfortunate with some of his passes. Turner performed well at back, but McEwen was quite unlike himself and was often at fault. Lindsay had very little to do, but was not to blame for either of the goals.

The visitors gave one the impression of being a team of athletes, and the only wonder was that they were so often penned in. But their defence was admirable, and at times it seemed as though all the men were playing back or half-back. Still, the forwards were always ready to seize an opening, and Picken was full of life and go at centre forward, though lack of judgment often rendered him a victim to the offside rule. Jack and Dalrymple were also speedy and clever.

In the other matches, Wellingborough, Brentford, and Portsmouth were beaten at home by Southampton, Northampton, and Brighton respectively, the latter's victory by 2 goals to nil being quite unexpected. Watford experienced defeat at Swindon, Fulham were badly beaten at New Brompton, West Ham went under by a goal to nil at Tottenham, and Reading were beaten by 3 goals to 2 at Millwall.

Luton now have not another Southern League match at home until March 4th, and as they enjoy the distinction of being the only team in

the League which has not won a match away from home this season, the immediate prospects are not of the brightest. Perhaps they will break their record, however. Who knows? The match on Saturday next is at West Ham, and with a long pull and a strong pull, Luton might get through. West Ham were victorious at Luton by 2 goals to nil, and the Bedfordshire men therefore have something to avenge.

* * *

I hear that the Luton directors have just made a fixture for one of their vacant dates—Saturday week—and Queen's Park Rangers will visit Luton on that day to play a friendly. It is the day on which Reading should have come to fulfil a Southern League fixture.

* * *

The following is the League table up to date:

Goals.

	Plvd.	Wn.	Dn.	Lt.	For.	Agst.	P.
Southampton	20	13	5	2	36	19	31
Bristol Rovers	19	12	4	3	37	18	28
Reading	18	12	2	4	36	18	26
New Brompton.....	21	8	7	6	33	24	23
Tottenham Hotspur.....	20	8	6	6	30	20	22
Northampton.....	18	10	1	7	29	29	21
Queen's Park Rangers...	18	8	3	7	30	28	19
Portsmouth	18	9	1	8	36	35	19
Plymouth Arville.....	19	8	3	8	30	26	19
Luton	21	7	3	11	27	33	17
Brighton and Hove.....	17	6	4	7	23	17	16
Millwall	20	6	4	10	18	30	16
Fulham	18	5	5	8	12	24	15
West Ham United	20	5	5	10	18	22	15
Swindon	20	7	1	12	24	36	15
Brentford	18	5	4	9	20	22	14
Watford	15	5	3	7	14	16	13
Wellingborough	18	4	1	13	15	51	9