

The Southern League.

LUTON v. PLYMOUTH ARGYLE.

Played at Luton on Monday. Result:—

Luton	nil.
Plymouth Argyle.....	nil.

The teams were as follow:—

Luton—Platt; Blackett and McCurdy; F. Hawkes, White, and R. Hawkes; Gallacher, Warner, Brown, Pickering, and Barnes.

Plymouth—Sutcliffe; Saul and A. Clark; Leech, C. Clark, and Mortimer; Briercliffe, Buck, Willcox, Buchanan, and Corrin.

Referee. Mr. A. Green (West Bromwich).

The Luton directors could scarcely have had a better opening for their new ground than on Monday. The weather was perfect, the crowd was great, and the spectators had the pleasure of seeing a magnificent struggle between two equally good teams. There were probably some six thousand people present, and it is safe to say that not one of them begrudged the sixpence paid for admission. Not often will they witness a finer, faster, or more exciting game.

The visitors won the toss, but there was not much in that, and after Mr. J. W. Green had set the ball in motion, both sides settled down to a ding-dong fight for League points. Last season, the Pilgrims were victorious by a couple of goals to nil, and they were very hopeful of repeating their success, having come up to London on the previous day in order that they might turn out perfectly fit.

And they were fit, too; as fit as fiddles—but so were Luton. The pace was a cracker from the outset, and the marvel was that the men could keep it up as they did. The Pilgrims were the first to attack, and Bob Hawkes was applauded for some skilful work in defence. Luton soon retaliated, Brown quickly getting in evidence, but in trying to head the ball, he came in contact with an opponent and sustained some damage in consequence.

Both ends were then visited in turn, but the first really dangerous shot was sent in by Brown, and Sutcliffe gave a corner. A period of exciting play followed, but Warner at length raised the siege by sending behind. Plymouth raced down the field, and Corrin had hard luck with a splendid shot which struck the upright. Platt was then tested by both Corrin and C. Clark, and elicited applause for the smart way in which he cleared. The homesters responded in fine style, and after Warner and White had tried shots, Brown had an opening, but was tripped from behind by the Plymouth centre-half, and there were loud appeals for a penalty, which, however, the referee disregarded.

A moment later Warner almost got through from a centre by Barnes, but the ball travelled just a little too fast, and Sutcliffe was able to run out and clear. It was a near thing. The visitors transferred operations to the other end and attacked all along the line, but they met with a stalwart defence and the defence prevailed. After this Luton made a number of vigorous attacks, and Pickering getting clear from a miss by Saul, had a good opening, but he gave Brown a bad pass, and the Plymouth backs were able to intercept.

A corner for Luton proved fruitless, and after Sutcliffe had saved a lovely shot from Warner, there were loud appeals for a penalty against Saul, who was alleged to have knocked the ball down with his hands. The referee consulted the linesmen, and then, to the chagrin of the onlookers, allowed the game to continue. Give-and-take play followed, and just before the interval Briercliffe netted from a centre by Corrin, but was yards offside.

The second half opened just as fast as the first had done, and both goals were attacked, but excitement was highest when Sutcliffe ran out to clear from a centre by Gallacher and fell to the ground with the ball under him; Brown tried hard to get at it with his feet, and while he was doing so, C. Clark rushed up and pushed him over. This led to a bit of an uproar on the part of the spectators behind the goal, and there appeared to be some very pointed remarks passing among the players, but the referee talked gently but firmly to both the men principally concerned, and the game then proceeded.

Excitement, however, ran very high, and one would not have been surprised if the game had developed into a rough-and-tumble, but luckily that was not the case, although once or twice the official in charge had to keep his wits about him. From a free kick, A. Clark placed well, and Willcox sent in a scorcher, but Platt saved and cleared grandly, whilst an even better effort was the saving of a shot from Buchanan.

Luton then took up the attack, and Saul, who was very erratic in his kicking, caused much laughter by sending the ball hard against the side of a house some distance from the ground. Gallacher and Warner both got within shooting range of the Plymouth goal, and Luton were still keeping up the pressure, when C. Clark kicked in a very dangerous manner as White was going to head the ball, and scraped his boot down the Luton man's face.

When Plymouth got away again, Briercliffe centred along the goal-line, and Buchanan headed in smartly at close quarters, but once more Platt was on the spot and saved in great style. A little later, at the other end, the referee deferred to the yelling of the crowd, and after giving a goal-kick, consulted a linesman and awarded a corner. This was placed by Barnes, and Bob Hawkes shot a little wide. Both custodians were subsequently called upon, but proved equal to all demands, and the game ended in a pointless draw.

It was a very fitting result to a memorable struggle, for a victory for either would have been hard lines on the losing team. The latter part of the game was not quite of so high-class a nature as the first, owing to the kicking-out tactics adopted, particularly by the visitors, but the pace was tremendous all the way through. Plymouth are a very fine lot of men, however, and on Monday's form, it will take a good team to beat them wherever they may go.

One principle they act upon—and it is a very

good one—is to get in first kick wherever possible, and their dashing tactics make it very difficult for the opposing side. I think Luton would have done better under the circumstances in playing a more open game, for the long passes always proved more useful than the short ones, the latter frequently enabling the opposing player to spoil the effort.

Still, there was very little to find fault with on the Luton side, and if they had only shown the same form in the game against Watford on Saturday, they would have romped home. If there was any criticism at all called for, it was on the part of Barnes and Gallacher, who sometimes neutralised good work by keeping the ball a moment too long and thus enabling opponents to frustrate their intentions.

Apart from this, the whole line of forwards gave a splendid account of themselves. The halves also were in fine fettle. White was quite himself again and gave a vastly improved display, whilst both Bob and Fred Hawkes did excellent work. At back, too, there was a wonderful difference, Blackett especially performing grandly, and he is probably entitled to the credit of being the best back on the field.

There was a fine display of custodianship, Platt, of Liverpool, who had been signed on owing to Lewis's inability to turn out, acquitting himself in a manner which was immensely pleasing to the spectators. His clearances were extremely smart, and with many of his kicks he landed the ball well over the half-way line. Sutcliffe, too, was as effective as ever, and that is as high praise as any man could wish for.

I was sorry to hear the people behind the goal at the town end keeping their tongues wagging so vigorously at various times during the game, and the directors will be well-advised to give attention to this, because shouting and slanging often lead to trouble. There was one loud-mouthed fellow who was not too particular in his choice of language, and if he should unfortunately be there another time, it would be well if he could be caught and made an example of.

In the Southern League matches on Saturday the great surprise was the defeat of Southampton on their own ground by Brentford, but it seems to have been rather a fluky win, the Saints having the play and the Bees getting the solitary goal. Millwall also won somewhat unexpectedly at Brighton by 2 goals to nil, and Queen's Park Rangers and Bristol Rovers did well, on their own grounds, to beat New Brompton and Northampton by 4—0 and 6—0 respectively. Portsmouth drew at Fulham and Tottenham did the same at Reading, but Norwich City went down at Plymouth, and Swindon suffered defeat at Canning Town.

The gate for the match Luton v. Plymouth realised £120, which was not so bad for a Monday game.

Portsmouth made a draw in their Southern League match at Watford on Monday at 2 goals all, obtaining the equalising point in the last minute of the game. Pompey played the greater part of the time with only ten men, owing to Harris, their custodian, hurting his shoulder in a collision with the goal-post and having to retire.

The "Plymouth Herald" says: "Thoroughly fit, Lewis is a brilliant custodian, as Sheffield and Sunderland folk will tell you." The same journal, speaking of the Luton captain, observes that "Bob is one of the most sincere amateurs that it is possible to meet."

The team for next Saturday's match at home against Brighton and Hove will be the same as that which performed so well against Plymouth. I am told that the arrangements for people leaving the ground will be improved, and people who live in the Dallow-road neighbourhood are requested to use that entrance and exit as much as possible. On Monday there were not more than a couple of hundred persons who came in that way, and that would not pay for keeping it open.

The Reserves journey to Brighton to play the Reserves there in the S.E.L. On Wednesday next, Luton are due at Grays to play off a United League fixture.

Peter Platt, the goalkeeper, who gave such a fine exhibition against Plymouth, hails from Rishton, near Blackburn. His first match as a professional was for the Blackburn Rovers, and he was afterwards transferred to Liverpool, where he remained three seasons, eventually displacing Perkins. Last season, however, Liverpool secured Doig, and Platt, of course, had to give way to the man with the big reputation. Peter has played for Rishton in the Lancashire Cricket League during the past summer.