

FOOTBALL.

THE SOUTHERN LEAGUE.

LUTON v. PLYMOUTH ARGYLE.

Played at Luton on Monday. Result:

LUTON Nil.

PLYMOUTH Nil.

This Southern League match, both the first of the season, and the first which the Town had ever played on the new ground, followed closely upon the formal opening. There was a very large attendance, the crowd being estimated at 6,000 or 7,000 at least. The grand stand was very full, and even the fence in the stand enclosure was thickly lined with spectators. The match itself was a very fast and interesting one and the draw which resulted was a very fair result.

So exciting was the play at times, that nothing but the roar of thousands of voices shouting encouragement or the reverse could be heard, and the enthusiasm seemed to infect the very players themselves, experienced with excited crowds though many of them be. Such was the interest taken in the match that a very large number of workers finished work early and brakes carried the men employed at Messrs. Hayward, Tyler, and Co.'s foundry to the ground at 5 o'clock, as soon as they were at liberty. And such was the tense excitement at one time that the language or some of the crowd, I regret to say, was anything but clean.

Ten minutes after the advertised time the teams lined up, Luton in their old colours of light blue and Plymouth wearing the famous "Green backs."

The sides were as follows:—

LUTON.

Platt.

Blackett, McCurdy.

F. Hawkes, White, R. Hawkes.

Gallacher, Warner, Brown, Pickering, Barnes.

O
Corrin, Buchanan, Willcox, Buck, Briercliffe.

Mortimer, C. Clark, Leech.

A. Clark, Saul.

Sutcliffe.

PLYMOUTH ARGYLE.

Referee, Mr. A. Green (West Bromwich);
Linesmen, Messrs. A. O'Donnell and A. W. McQue.

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It will be seen that Luton was playing a
new goalie, Platt, of Liverpool, owing to the
inability of Lewis to take his place in the team
yet.

Mr. J. W. Green assumed a position in the
centre of the field, close to the ball, and at the
instant when the whistle of the referee sounded,
he kicked off, passing the ball in expert style
to Mortimer, the Argyll left half who very
considerately landed the leather out of play in
order that Mr. Green and the photographer
of the ceremony (Mr. Thurston), might make
their way to the friendly shelter of the grand
stand before hostilities really commenced.

Luton started off very promisingly, Captain
"Bob" Hawkes, breaking up the initial
attack of the "Pilgrims" with, apparently,
the greatest ease. Plymouth opened with
determination, but Pickering and Barnes soon
set Luton going, to the fear of Saul, who in-
tended leaving nothing to chance, and stopped
their progress by kicking out. The homesters
were not to be denied and attacked again,
Gallacher landing behind with an excellent
shot. A capital long pass by "Bob" Hawkes
to Barnes brought Luton into shooting distance
but the Argyll defence were looking very
sharply after the inside men and centre-for-
ward, and Pickering was unable to turn his
pass from Gallacher.

Brown was next hurt by an opponent head-
ing him at the back of his cranium and play
had to be stopped for a few minutes.

Luton returned and "Sandy" shot so well
that Sutcliffe was forced into conceding a
corner. The kick was taken by Gallacher and
Warner kicked behind. A capital clearance by
Blackett gave Warner possession and he used
his opportunities so well that Sutcliffe had some
difficulty in negotiating his shot.

Up to this stage Luton had been having a
good deal the better of the play and nothing
but Sutcliffe's fine work saved the goal on a
number of occasions. The pace was so hot
that it was expected that the teams would be-
come stale before very long, but nothing of the
sort showed itself before half-time. Plymouth
became a trifle more determined and by sheer
persistence worked their way down to the other
end where Blackett was forced to put the ball
out of play for safety's sake.

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persists and where the game is played out of play for safety's sake.

The very sound defence of the homesters served to transfer the game to the other end, where Gallacher's elusiveness caused Plymouth a good deal of anxiety. But the Pilgrims were not by any means dismayed by the pressure which Luton had been able to exert up to the present and were just beginning to settle down into their stride. Blackett cleverly intercepted a dangerous centre by Briercliffe but the ball travelled out to Corrin, who showed himself to be a man whom it was well to watch by a fast long shot, which struck the post and made it and the crowd tremble.

Next minute Corrin centred with a precision which might have ended in disaster for Luton had not White's useful head turned it from its course. Evidently, a firm believer in the advice of the old saying, "If at first you don't succeed," he made another attempt to find the net, and this time Platt had to leave his charge in order to clear. For a few minutes at any rate Plymouth intended giving Luton the greatest possible amount of trouble, but a splendidly-aimed long distance "daisy-cutter" found Platt well on the alert and his save proved him to be an exceedingly capable goalie.

By a special combining movement Luton changed the scene of play from one end to the other, but they were too anxious to score and Warner attempted to put Luton up with a good attempt before he came within reasonable distance of Sutcliffe. Gallacher continued to display a trickiness which altogether disconcerted his opponents, and after an especially fine piece of play he essayed a centre which the Pilgrim's defence pounced upon before any of the Luton forwards could interfere. From this the Argyle took up the running again, and Buchanan had a long shot cleverly saved by Platt. Willcox followed this up with a "wide." White put the stopper on the efforts of the Argyle for the time being by a skilful piece of tackling, but when he attempted to score he was much less successful.

Briercliffe had the disappointment of seeing an excellently-judged centre of his intercepted by McCurdy who gave the "Pilgrim's" marching orders at once. "Sandy" Brown obtained possession when well-placed and coolly passed his opponents, when C. Clark, finding everything else had failed, had recourse to charging the Luton centre in the back. He fetched him down and spoilt an almost certain goal, and thereby came within the operation of the rule as to penalty-kicks, but fortunately for him and unfortunately for Luton the referee did not even see the offence.

Plymouth made their way towards the Luton goal again and Corrin sent over the bar with an excellent attempt. Barnes was the means of transferring play to the opposite end and centred to Brown. But Sutcliffe noticed the danger which threatened him, and made a dash for the ball, which he reached a moment before "Sandy" and cleared. This was one of the narrowest escapes of the day and nothing but the alertness and the coolness of mind of the "Pilgrim" goalie saved the situation.

Plymouth travelled down the field in grand style and Buck appeared to have an almost certain goal, but McCurdy intercepted his shot—a very hot one. "Bob" Hawkes did similarly from another dangerous attempt and the danger was for the moment averted. Saul badly missed his kick and let through Pickering who passed centre-wards, but Brown missed obtaining possession by an inch or two and next minute the leather was far from his feet.

But, chiefly through the instrumentality of Barnes, "Sandy" obtained again and A. Clark had to kick high over his own goal in order to satisfy his anxiety. Gallacher took the corner-kick in splendid style and just as the ball was sailing past the goal, only two inches off the line Sutcliffe's fist shot upwards and outwards and the sphere dropped well outside the danger zone.

Barnes quickly obtained possession again, however, but placed behind with a good shot. A free-kick for a foul taken by Blackett travelled far closer to the goal than the Plymouth defenders expected, and they were rather surprised, after allowing the ball to pass between their ranks without any attempt being made to stop it under the impression that it was wide of the mark, to see that it missed the goal only by about a foot. A fine clearance by McCurdy set the Luton forwards going again, and Warner receiving from Barnes gave Sutcliffe a splendid shot which the famous goalie cleverly negotiated. But as the ball rebounded into play the home front string made a rush for it and Saul was seen to deliberately handle it.

This was within the penalty-area again but once more the referee failed to see a glaring infringement of the rules. He consulted the linesman on the side where the incident took

place and his opinion being confirmed a second penalty-kick to Luton was refused. A capital centre by Barnes missed Brown's head by an inch or two. Had "Sandy" been able to get to it a goal would have been almost certain.

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Briercliffe finished up a clever dribbling run by placing well towards goal, but Platt left his charge, after the manner of the Plymouth goalie, caught the ball and cleared. The "Pilgrims" returned to the attack but a long pass by Blackett to Barnes quickly changed the aspect of affairs. The wing-man quickly centred to Brown, but he was unable to give the rapidly travelling ball just the touch which would have been sufficient to turn it into the net. Briercliffe, receiving from Corrin, placed the ball in the goal, but seemed surprised to find himself again off-side. Half-time arrived with the score sheet a blank.

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The second period opened very promisingly, Luton commencing to press at once and Brown placing a few inches past the post. "Bob" Hawkes unfortunately missed the mark with a long distance shot. Gallacher got away from a free-kick taken by Blackett and shot into the hands of Sutcliffe who went down with the ball in his hands. Brown and Warner made a rush to try to force the ball out of his arms but just as the whistle sounded, several of the "Pilgrims" made a rush and "Sandy" was sent sprawling. He rose at once and seemed inclined to argue the matter with his opponent and both were getting a talking-to by the referee.

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A minute or two later the same official had occasion to again speak to Brown and the Argyle man with whom he was at loggerheads. Willcox tried a fast ground shot which Platt saved in capital fashion. McCurdy had the misfortune to let through Buchanan, and Platt had to run out to save in order to avert danger. Another very hot one from Buchanan, following upon a free-kick against Luton was saved in capital fashion by Platt, and a minute later Buck himself relieved the pressure by kicking behind.

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At the other end Pickering shaved the cross-bar with a very fast shot just as the whistle sounded for off-side. "Sandy" Brown worked his way through the defence in clever fashion but passing out to the right wing Warner disappointed everyone by sending high over the bar. From the goal-kick the "Pilgrims" made their way to the other end, where Buchanan made a rush to meet a forward pass just at the same time as Platt also made a dash for the ball. The goalie was the faster, however, and cleared with a tremendous kick.

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The Argyle was having a good deal more of the game at this point than at any time before, but the Luton defence was such as to baffle them at every turn. On both sides the work of the backs was particularly good but at this juncture the Luton rear rank and especially Blackett were playing in wonderfully fine fashion, breaking up nearly all the rushes of the dashing Argyle forwards before they got to a comfortable distance for shooting. Brown made a fine dribbling run towards goal and things looked black for the "Pilgrims," until the Luton man was badly tripped up just outside the penalty-area. McCurdy placed the free-kick on the wrong side of the goal post.

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A well-aimed shot by Corrin was saved by Platt in a fashion rather bordering on the marvellous. A second attempt by Corrin was again dealt with very skilfully by Platt. From a forward pass by Brown, Gallacher made a dashing run towards goal, but Sutcliffe seeing his danger, made a sudden rush and taking the ball practically from off his opponent's foot, made a grand save. When the end came a very fast and unusually interesting game had resulted in a draw with no goals scored.