

THE English Cup Competition

CRYSTAL PALACE v. LUTON.

Played at the Crystal Palace on Saturday.
Result:—

Crystal Palace	1 goal.
Luton	nil.

The teams were as follow:—

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

Crystal Palace—Hewitson; Walker and Edwards; Innerd, Birnie, and Astley; Wallace, Harker, Watkins, Needham, and Roberts.

Referee, Mr. Burgess.

Some people thought I had formed an exaggerated idea of the capabilities of the Palace team when I expressed a doubt as to Luton's ability to beat them in the Cup-tie and on a sodden ground. I was told that Luton did not go all out in the recent United League match, that on the chances then they ought to have won comfortably, and that in a Cup-tie fight quite a different result would be arrived at.

I am always ready to listen to the views of others, but, as the old saying has it, "a man convinced against his will, is of the same opinion still," and after listening to all the arguments on the other side, I still felt it very questionable whether Luton would get through and that if they did it would only be after a hard struggle.

It would have given me great pleasure on Saturday if the Luton players had proved to demonstration that I had taken an unduly pessimistic view of the situation but, alas, as my readers know only too well, quite the contrary was the case. I am perfectly willing to admit that on a dry pitch Luton would in all probability be the better side, but with the conditions as they were on Saturday, I fancy the Palace team would hold their own five times out of six.

As a matter of fact, it was a great shame that an important match should have to be decided on such a ground as that at the Palace was on this occasion, for it was nothing but a quagmire, and I question if Luton will ever be called upon to play on a worse. Near the goals it was bad enough, but in the centre there was nothing but thick mud, and when the ball once got there it was difficult to get it out again.

Luton deserve credit for trying to adapt themselves to circumstances, but they lacked the experience of the Palace in this direction, and did not play the open game with conspicuous success. Moreover, the Glaziers were simply bubbling over with enthusiasm, and instead of waiting for the ball to drop they generally followed it all the way, and derived considerable advantage from being the first to arrive.

The game was a fairly interesting one, was fought out in a thoroughly sportsmanlike way, and the victory went to the team which just deserved to win. The spectators made a pretty good show on the stands and round the ring, and one would have been inclined to say that there were five or six thousand present, but as the gate receipts totalled only £88, it seems that there could have been only about half that number.

Luton won the toss, but very little advantage attached to choice of ends. The visitors were the first to attack, but the Palace soon transferred the play, and a corner was conceded to Needham, following which the Palace were very pressing in their attentions, Luton being kept pretty much on the defence. Wallace got in a capital shot, and a good hard tussle ensued in the vicinity of the Luton goal, but at last McCurdy succeeded in effecting a clearance.

Luton retaliated, but were not able to make much impression on the Palace defence, and the homesters again acted on the aggressive, a fine shot from Needham eliciting enthusiastic cheers from the Palace supporters. Even at this early stage it was clear the Glaziers were going to make a bold bid for victory, and the eagerness with which they followed the ball was good to see, when viewed from a sympathetic or impartial standpoint.

Luton now took a turn, and a corner followed upon a centre by Barnes. Warner popped, but the Palace cleared and raced away on the left, only to be stopped, however, by Barnes. Soon afterwards, the homesters were visiting terms with Platt, and a fine shot. The Luton custodian did well but a warm time

left, but was miles offside, and the point, of course, was not allowed.

The play continued to be fairly even, each end being visited in turn, and from one of Luton's incursions Warner had a glorious opportunity to drop the ball at the feet of the other forwards in front of goal, but he chose to try a cross shot instead, and this passed harmlessly behind. Replying to a good run by Wallace, Luton forced another corner, but White shot high over from Warner's centre.

A free kick against the Palace for a foul on Brown gave Luton another look-in. It was only a look, however, and the goal was never in much danger. But a little later, Luton became much more threatening, and a lovely shot from Bob Hawkes was saved by the custodian with outstretched hands. The ball then dropped at his feet, but there was no one up, and he was able to clear. Pickering next made a dash and nearly got through, but at the last moment Walker just managed to save the situation by kicking into touch.

In another assault by Luton the Palace defence got regularly tied up, and a score seemed quite on the cards, but nothing more than a corner resulted, and that was not turned to account. The Glaziers replied with vigour, and from now to the interval Luton were kept strictly on the defence, and once Platt punted away nicely from a corner kick, while the last incident was a grand clearance by Blackett when the centre-forward, taking a middle from the outside-left, looked uncommonly like going clean through on his own.

From the way in which the Palace commenced the second half, it seemed as though they had made use of the interval to lay down a plan of campaign. They were certainly all of one mind when the ball was once started, and combined so well as to quite over-play the Luton defence.

Luton got away to begin with, and Warner put in a fast grounder, but it was the only opening the visitors found during the first five minutes, and within that time the Palace succeeded in winning the game. From a centre by Roberts, Wallace shot just over the bar, but a corner was given, Platt presumably having touched the ball and diverted its course. Wallace took the kick and placed beautifully, but Platt cleared.

The Glaziers were not to be driven away, however, and Roberts had hard lines with a shot which struck the upright. Then from a throw-in on the left, the ball was nicely put across to the centre, where the whole string of forwards were lying in wait, and Harker getting possession, had little difficulty at close quarters in beating Platt.

Luton, finding the game going against them, infused a little more life into their play, and there were some very smart attacks on the Palace goal. Barnes was the first to show the way, and after the custodian had cleared, Luton renewed their overtures and appeared like meeting with success, but the homesters obtained relief by giving a corner. This was placed by Warner, and eventually Bob Hawkes sent behind.

Directly afterwards, however, the Luton skipper was seen making one of his irresistible rushes, with the ball at his feet, and he finished up with a long cross shot which beat the custodian all the way and found a resting-place in the net. From where I sat, it looked a magnificent goal, and great was the astonishment of myself and those in the vicinity when the referee disallowed it and gave the Palace a free kick.

Subsequent inquiry elicited that the ball touched, or was supposed to have touched, Sandy Brown, who was offside, and that thus one of the finest efforts of the day was neutralised. Sandy made no attempt to play the ball, so it was decidedly hard luck to have the goal disallowed. Luton had several chances after this, and Macdonald especially ought to have done some execution, but he delayed his shots until a defender got in the way, and the ball rebounded.

Then another misfortune overtook Luton, Warner making a rush and a flying kick at the ball and missing. So impetuous was the attempt that he went some yards and then came a cropper on his back. It was at once seen that he was badly hurt, and he had to be assisted off the field. He was off a quarter of an hour or more, and though he then returned for a time, he was completely crippled.

The strange thing was that while he was off, Luton seemed to persistently play to the right wing, and Barnes and Pickering seldom got the ball. Many chances of making headway were lost in this way, and though the visitors held their own fairly well, it was the Palace who were the more dangerous. Once the inside-left got clean away, and there seemed nothing to prevent him scoring, but just on the penalty line he stumbled, either through the mud or someone's foot, and there were loud appeals by the spectators for a penalty, which was not given.

The last incident was a corner for Luton, but before it could be taken the whistle sounded for time, and the Palace players skipped off the field followed by a host of enthusiastic admirers. On the whole, I think the winners deserved the victory, but all the same, the match was no fair test of the strength of the rival teams owing to the shocking state of the ground.

Luton played very well but the homesters were better, and with a little luck may go a long way in the competition. They are certainly up to the average of the Southern League First Division teams, but whilst giving them credit for that, I'm not sure they would rank amongst the top-markers.

What I like about them is their enthusiasm, for they play with the skill of the professional and the deadly earnestness of the tyro. They are a well-balanced lot, too, and it would be difficult to pick out a really weak spot in the team. The managers of the Club are indeed fortunate to have brought together such an excellent combination at the first time of asking.

Platt kept a good goal for Luton, and Blackett and McCurdy gave a very good account of themselves, though in the second half the former several times allowed his dribbling ability to take him too far up the field, for when at last he had to part with the ball it was not always to the best advantage. The halves were in pretty good form, and Brown tried very hard at centre-forward, but the passing and centres of the wing men were not invariably accurate, and too often the ball was placed behind instead of in front of a comrade.

Still, the heavy going accounted for a good deal, and when it was such a job to lift the ball out of the mud, accuracy in placing could scarcely be expected. The Palace, perhaps by reason of greater practice, triumphed over the obstacles better than their opponents, and to that fact they owe their victory.

Commenting on the game, a writer in the "Morning Leader" says:—"Luton were beaten as much by the mud as anything, and the best effort of the day came from Bob Hawkes, who played a game that I shall not easily forget. His try on this occasion was from about thirty yards out. It went all along the ground, and beat the Palace goalkeeper, unluckily going in off the boot of a Luton forward who was standing offside, though he made no attempt to play it. Bob Hawkes seemed to take the Luton team on his shoulders, and refused to believe that they were going to be beaten. Not once, nor twice, did he wend through 'on his own,' throwing off one challenge and then another; and if he had

scored an equalising goal it was no more than he deserved. The shot from him which did not materialise was a piece of misfortune for Luton."

All the other Southern League clubs got through the Cup-ties except Northampton, who could only make a draw with West Stanley. Brentford beat Wycombe Wanderers by 4 to nil, Watford accounted for Southport by 3 to 1, Brighton did well to win at Glossop by a goal to nil, and at Sheppey, Norwich City were victorious by 2 to nil.

There were only three matches in the Southern League on Saturday. Bristol Rovers entertained and beat West Ham by 2 goals to 1, but Southampton drew at Millwall at 3 goals all, and at Park Royal Fulham beat the Rangers by 3 goals to 1.

The following is the League table up to date:—

					Goals.		
	Plyd.	Wn.	Lt.	Dn.	For.	Agst	Pts
Fulham	15	8	1	6	20	8	22
Tottenham H.	13	9	2	2	23	7	20
Southampton	14	7	3	4	21	17	18
Bristol Rovers.....	15	8	5	2	32	21	18
Plymouth Argyle...	14	7	4	3	20	12	17
Luton	13	6	3	4	28	15	16
Portsmouth	14	5	3	6	22	15	16
Brentford	14	6	5	3	14	15	15
Millwall	15	5	6	4	20	20	14
Norwich City	13	5	5	3	18	15	13
Reading	14	5	6	3	17	18	13
Queen's Park Rans.	15	5	8	2	22	23	12
Northampton	13	5	7	1	11	26	11
Watford	13	3	6	4	16	23	10
West Ham United...	15	5	10	0	15	19	10
New Brompton	14	2	7	5	10	35	9
Swinden	13	2	7	4	10	20	8
Brighton and Hove	13	3	8	2	10	20	8

Luton Town v. Southampton and Bassett v. the World for supplying a good Overcoat or Mackintosh to watch the match in.—Note address: 28, Wellington-street.—[ADVT.]

On Saturday next, the Luton first team have another onerous task on hand, in the form of a visit to Southampton. Warner will be unable to turn out, and I hear that his place will be taken by Gallacher, though I should have thought it would have been better to give a chance to Latheron, who has been doing excellent service for the Reserves. The inside-left position is also a little doubtful.

The Reserves will be at home to Grays United, who have been showing considerable improvement of late, and a good game may therefore be expected.