

CRYSTAL PALACE v. LUTON TOWN.

Played on the famous "final" ground at the Crystal Palace, Sydenham, on Saturday. Result :

CRYSTAL PALACE 1 goal
LUTON nil.

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Teams :—

LUTON.

Platt

Blackett

McCurdy

F. Hawkes

White

R. Hawkes

Warner McDonald

Brown

Pickering

Barnes

O

Roberts Needham

Watkins

Harker

Wallace

Astley

Birnie

Innerd

Edwards

Walker

Hewitson

CRYSTAL PALACE.

Referee, Mr. Burgess.

The Luton linesman was Mr. G. W. Walker.

This match, the final stage of the qualifying round, was Luton's first entrance into the English Cup competitions this season, but comparatively little interest was shown in the event by people in the town. Ever since the draw with Crystal Palace was made known a large number of the team's supporters had seemed to be quite resigned to defeat as inevitable. This view had been occasioned by the fact that the Glaziers led Luton by a goal to nil in a match which was stopped a little before time some few weeks ago. On this occasion the Town ground was in a muddy, heavy condition, a state which seems to be especially suitable to the Palace men. A large amount of rain had fallen during the week, and this had had its effect upon a ground which is never ideal. Of course, all this tended to the belief that the home team would have an advantage which the visitors would find it impossible to circumvent. Unfortunately, the fears proved to be only too reasonable.

Being so fearful lest their favourites should have their colours lowered, Luton's supporters did not attend the match in force, and the Great Northern through excursion was patronised by only about 40 or 50 people. Indeed, the crowd of 5,000 was practically lost in the huge amount of space allowed spectators on the Palace ground. The weather was fine, though, as stated above, the pitch was in bad condition. Before the end of the match it somewhat resembled a quagmire, but despite this fact play was as fast as the players could make it.

"Bob" Hawkes won the toss, and his team set to work with a will at the outset. A neat centre by Warner was the first piece of good play noticeable, but Edwards changed the play. The Palace forwards attacked in line, but Watkins bungled. They returned, but the Luton backs frustrated their efforts and set Barnes at work. Pickering received, and was robbed. The ball travelled out to Warner, who shot high over the bar in rather sorry fashion. Astley put paid to the account of a very promising movement by Warner and McDonald, and initiated a pretty run by the home right wing that forced a fruitless corner.

The home forwards began to combine better and made several dashes down the field, only to be beaten by Blackett's cool, clean clearances. On one occasion Wallace tricked McCurdy and shot, Platt having to handle to save. A scrimmage in front of goal resulted, and was only relieved by Harker getting offside. Luton found their feet again by means of long passing movements between Barnes, Brown and Warner, and this effort looked most likely, but was spoilt by a weak finish which sent the ball rolling towards Hewitson. Unfortunately the visitors seemed quite unable to settle down to such tactics as these, but on the other hand the Glaziers were playing in a go-ahead, direct fashion, which showed up well by comparison. Wallace was in good fettle and put in some good centres, one of which Needham placed in the net when standing offside.

Towards the close of the first half the Palace attempted to force the game, and the Luton men were not careful enough in their passing. White landed over the bar from a capital-placed corner-kick by Warner, and Barnes sent behind in a good opening. Hewitson brought off a capital save from one of "Bob" Hawkes' hard, long drives which certainly deserved to score. Luton continued their aggressive work, and a dribble by Brown looked so dangerous that Edwards had no hesitation in giving away a corner in order to save. At the other end Platt punched out a centre from the foot of Roberts. Luton made several more attempts to get through, but on each occasion the work of one of the opposing halves or backs spoilt their chance. Just before the interval Wallace put in a flag-kick which Platt punched away, and Watkins was robbed by Blackett only a few yards from the goal-line. An even half ended with no score.

...even had been entered with the score.

Immediately after the resumption Luton commenced to attack vigorously, apparently intent on forcing matters. In the first minute Edwards stopped "Sandy" Brown's career, but the forwards returned again, and Hewitson had to save a grounder from Warner. Play was fast and interesting to watch, but Luton were already showing improved form. The Palace, however, began to find their feet once more, and Watkins only missed the post by inches. Birnie, the Captain of the Sydenham men, had been playing a good game, and passed the ball well forward so that the front string were swarming round the Luton goal. An unexpected dash placed the Palace one point ahead, Harker being fortunate enough to put on the successful finishing touch, greatly to the delight of the crowd.

This reverse woke up the Luton men, whose play became more aggressive, and Warner immediately afterwards put in a shot which went a little on the wrong side of the post. A long pass by McDonald found Brown ready, but Hewitson cleverly saved a capital shot. "Bob" Hawkes' resourceful play began to come more prominently before the eyes of the general public at this point. A dangerous rush by the home forwards was stopped by McCurdy, and Luton re-commenced their pressure. When only a few yards from goal "Sandy" put in a hard shot which, unluckily, struck another man's foot. Exerting themselves to the utmost the visitors were just now making excellent headway. "Bob" Hawkes receiving a clearance from McCurdy placed in the net with one of his famous shots, and the crowd at once shouted "Goal," but to their surprise Mr. Burgess would not allow it, though why, they were at a loss to understand. On enquiry later, it was found that the ball had touched the foot of "Sandy" Brown, who was standing offside, before it passed over the line, and this piece of hard luck nullified it.

Warner came into collision with Innerd and so badly injured one of his legs that he had to be carried to the side of the playing pitch and there treated by Trainer "Billie" Lawson. He was able to resume after a little rest, but he was somewhat of a cripple, and after being a passenger for a little time discreetly retired. Even with one man short Luton more than held their own, and it says much for the Palace defence that during the last fifteen minutes they were kept out. Platt saved a capital header from Harker immediately after he had sent over the bar. The end came with Crystal Palace still leading by 1-0.

It can honestly be said that on the general run of the play Luton were a little the better team, and at least deserved to draw, if not to win. The team were in better form than during the three previous matches, but they were very unlucky, and were labouring under great disadvantages because of the state of the ground. The homesters' attacking line were perhaps slightly more spirited than Luton's, but in every other department they fell below the visitors. It was unfortunate for the Strawhatters that they were drawn against such a well-balanced Cup-fighting team in their very first tie this season. The locals were accustomed to the quagmire-like appearance which the ground presents after heavy rain, and this was very useful when combined with their usual spirited kick and rush game.

Of the players Platt did some good work, and the backs were especially fine. The halves' harassing play broke up the Palace well, and the forwards, generally, were in good fettle. The outside men were speedy, and Brown and McDonald tried hard. The latter, however, was not quite fast enough, and but little was seen of Pickering. On the Palace side Birnie, Wallace, and Watkins were the pick, but the attack was stronger than the defence.