

The United League.

LUTON v. CRYSTAL PALACE.

Played at Luton on Monday. Result:—

Crystal Palace	2 goals.
Luton	1 goal.

Two alterations were made in the Luton team, Macdonald going right-half in place of Fred Hawkes, and Wiles, the new man from Rushden, appearing at inside-right. The Crystal Palace team included—Hewitson; Walker and Edwards; Innerd, Birnie, and Grant; Thompson, Wallace, Woodger, Needham, and Roberts. Referee, Mr. A. J. Kipps (London).

With a drizzling rain, a field like a farm-yard, and a Monday match, it is difficult to get up anything like enthusiasm, and the seven or eight hundred spectators who patronised the game spent anything but a cheerful time. Matters would have been bad enough if Luton had been winning, but with the points going to the other side the spectators, or some of them, got into a bad temper and threw all the blame they could, and a good deal more than was deserved, on the poor referee.

This game, it will be remembered, was down for decision in November, and the Palace had hard luck in being deprived of victory owing to darkness setting in and causing play to be stopped six or seven minutes before time. They were then leading by a goal to nil, and as they beat Luton in the Cup-tie by the same score, and again on Monday won by the margin of a goal, they are fairly entitled to regard themselves as the better team. They certainly seem to be more in earnest, they are smarter in getting on the ball and much speedier in getting away with it, and these qualities more than atone for any others which they may lack in comparison with Luton.

Winning the toss, they were the first to get away, and after Roberts had shot the wrong side of the net, he got in a centre to which Wallace applied his head, and a goal seemed certain, but the ball went across the goal and rolled just outside the post. Pressing again, one or two rebounds helped them right to the mouth of goal, but Platt then rushed out and cleared with a mighty kick. Luton responded, and from a free kick by Blackett either Barnes or Pickering might have scored, but they got on the ball together, and mulled the chance between them.

After Platt had saved from the right wing, Warner gave Pickering a fine opening, but the inside-left was too deliberate in taking aim, and his shot rebounded off one of the backs. Pickering got clear again soon afterwards and sent in a shot which the custodian was only able to get rid of at the second attempt. Wiles then showed up with a fine effort, and Brown a little later had the goal quite at his mercy, but disappointed expectations by shooting the wrong side of the upright.

Pickering finished up a capital run with the best shot of the match, but Hewitson saved splendidly, whilst Platt did ditto at the other end to a brilliant attempt by Woodger. After that, the visitors got down once more, and Wallace sent in a shot which cannoned off someone to the foot of Needham, who drew first blood with a neat shot. Half-time was called almost immediately, and the Palace thus crossed over with a lead of one goal.

The wonder was that they did not add to this in the first few minutes of the second half, and Platt had to keep all his wits about him to deal with the shots sent in. Then Blackett, in trying to force the play, got down against the halfway line, close behind the forwards, and while he was there, the Palace worked their way up to goal, and Thompson finished up with a shot at close quarters, giving Platt no chance.

This second reverse seemed to show Luton the need of a little more exertion, and they set about their business with right goodwill, Pickering and Barnes, but Pickering especially, leading the attack again and again. Once, however, the inside-left had a glorious opening, but again he delayed his shot and Innerd managed to get in its way. Hewitson next gave a corner to a fine shot by Barnes, and Luton now pressed for all they were worth. Eventually Barnes sent the ball beautifully across the mouth of goal, and Warner rushed in and scored.

As there were still twenty minutes to go, it seemed quite on the cards that Luton would even now pull the game out of the fire, but hopes were not realised. The homesters fell away, and with the Palace kicking out of play at every opportunity, the concluding stages became rather tame, and the visitors managed to maintain their lead to the end.

The Glaziers are certainly a very smart lot, and where all prove themselves such gluttons for work, it is hard to single out any for special mention. Roberts and Needham, however, played grandly on the left wing, Woodger acquitted himself well at centre-forward, and Birnie at centre-half is as good as they make 'em. Hewitson also keeps a fine goal.

In the Luton team, Pickering was the best of the forwards, but Barnes ran him very close, and Warner was also in good form. Wiles, the new man, shaped well, but he did not get many opportunities, and the terrible state of the ground also militated against his first appearance. As far as one could judge, however, he seems likely to prove a pretty reliable forward. White did heaps of work at half-back, and McCurdy also played a fine game, whilst Platt gave a brilliant display in goal. Blackett's eagerness to have a share in the attack made him somewhat unreliable at back in the second half.