

UNITED LEAGUE.

LUTON v. CRYSTAL PALACE.

Played at Luton on Monday. Result:—

Crystal Palace	1 goal.
Luton	nil.

* * *

The teams were as follow:—

Luton—Platt; Jackson and McCurdy; F. Hawkes, White, and R. Hawkes; Schofield, Macdonald, Slater, Pickering, and Barnes.

Crystal Palace—Hewitson; Wills and Edwards; Astley, Ryan, and Innerd; Needham, Harker, Weston, Woodger, and Roberts.

Referee, Mr. L. Bullimer (Northampton).

* * *

There were three points of interest about Monday's match. The first was that it was a benefit for Fred Hawkes and Fred White, two local men who have done splendid service for the Club; the second was that Luton were pitted against a team they have never beaten; and thirdly, Luton were giving a trial to a new centre-forward, a young amateur from Middlesbrough way. They were the three chief features, and I'm afraid it must be said that the interest began and ended there.

* * *

It was unfortunate for the beneficiares that the rain came on just before four o'clock—the time of the kick-off—and this doubtless affected the attendance, which probably fell short of two thousand. The rain also greatly interfered with the play, making both the ground and the ball greasy, and accounting for a good many bad misses.

* * *

Luton won the toss and played the first half with the wind in their favour. They went down the field in good style at the very outset, and Macdonald, in trying to head a centre by Barnes, brought his head into violent contact with that of Edwards, as a result of which both sustained injuries necessitating their retirement—Edwards with a cut on the top of his head and Macdonald with a gash just under the eye.

* * *

Edwards was not off long, but during his absence the Palace played only one back, and against these tactics the Luton forwards could make little headway, though once Hewitson was called upon to save from Pickering. Jackson was deservedly applauded for a fine effort in stopping the Palace forwards, and McCurdy afterwards rendered similar service when Woodger showed up with a likely-looking run. Platt then cleared very cleverly from a centre by Harker, taking the ball from Weston in the very nick of time.

* * *

Macdonald now came on again, but it was soon evident that he was a good deal handicapped by his injury. Luton attacking, Wills nearly put through his own goal from a centre by Barnes, Hewitson only just being able to save, and Woodger then made another fine run, his effort being finally frustrated by Platt. Luton renewing their overtures, Slater, standing close in, headed high above the bar from a centre by Pickering, and then once again the visitors came near doing the trick through the instrumentality of Needham.

* * *

In general play, however, Luton were fully holding their own, and many more chances fell to them than to the visitors, but somehow or other the forwards never seemed able to get in a decent shot. Generally they dallied too long in trying for better openings, and shots were either not taken or only taken to rebound off an opponent.

* * *

The only thing that aroused anything like enthusiasm from the spectators was a huge goal-kick by Platt, the ball passing over the goal-line at the other end without being touched by another player. Luton ought to have secured the lead in this half, but they failed badly when it came to pressing an attack home, and the interval arrived with a blank score-sheet.

* * *

Macdonald now underwent treatment at the hands of Dr. Rose, who had been telephoned for, and it was found that his injury was much more serious than he himself had supposed. The cheek-bone, it appeared, was knocked right in, and it was a question whether the injury would not be of a permanent character. Mac was not allowed to turn out again, and Luton therefore played the second half with only ten men.

* * *

At first, Fred Hawkes went outside-right and Schofield inside, but this formation was not long adhered to, and Fred went wherever his services were needed. Despite their misfortune, Luton had a splendid opportunity of opening the score, Jackson placing so well from a free kick that Pickering had practically nothing to do but touch the ball through. At the crucial moment, however, the inside-left slipped and fell—a weakness to which he seems particularly prone.

* * *

Luton soon afterwards had another excellent chance, but the forwards simply would not

shoot at the first opportunity, and as a consequence their efforts all ran to waste. The visitors then responded, and were much more business-like in their attempts, though when their goal did come, it was by a sort of a fluke, Platt running out and failing to clear. The ball went to Roberts, who merely had to shoot into an open goal. Platt rushed back, but was only in time to knock the ball into the net.

* * *

A minute later, Woodger netted the ball, but was given offside, though it was a question if he really were, as the forwards had gone down in a line. From a free kick the Palace nearly scored again, and just before the finish a shot from Roberts struck the bar. The homesters made several efforts to get an equalising goal, but without avail, and so the Palace added one more to their list of victories over Luton, by the usual margin of one goal.

* * *

The visitors quite deserved their win, for their forwards were always better than the Luton front string, who played a very disjointed game. Slater worked hard, but it will be some considerable time yet before he is fit to take a place in class football. The left wing was effective enough in taking the ball up the field, but there was no finishing power, Pickering especially being very disappointing in this respect.

* * *

Schofield, too, is not improving, for instead of trusting to his speed he resorts to trickery and it doesn't come off. The forwards altogether are failing badly, and something will have to be done quickly, or the Club will soon be in an unenviable position. We have played six Southern League matches and have only scored four goals—four goals in nine hours! Last season, our first six games brought us sixteen goals—a very different state of affairs. And the curious thing is that we have all the forwards available that we had then, and the team otherwise remains the same, except for the substitution of Jackson for Blackett.

* * *

On Monday no fault could be found with the defence—it was simply the forwards who were to blame, and even allowing for the absence of Macdonald in the second half, one is bound to say that the play was still of a most unsatisfactory character.

* * *

The man who caught the eye most among the Palace forwards was Woodger, who was not only very fast but had the advantage of knowing how to turn his speed to account. Taking the front string as a whole, there was no exceptional brilliance, but the forwards were out to get goals, and when they had a chance they were on it.