

Southern League.

LUTON v. CRYSTAL PALACE.

Played at Luton on Saturday. Result :—

Luton 2 goals.

Crystal Palace 1 goal.

Teams :—

Luton—Platt; Hogg and McCurdy; F. Hawkes, White, and R. Hawkes; Latheron, Gittins, Brown, Fitzpatrick, and Barnes.

Crystal Palace—Hewitson; Wills and Needham; Innerd, Ledger, and Foster; Weston, Hodgkinson, Astley, Woodger, and Roberts.

Referee, Mr. C. C. Fallowfield.

Luton have had the greatest respect for the Crystal Palace team ever since that Saturday in November, 1905, when the spectators expected to see the home team easily beat the Glaziers, who were then fresh to the United League. The result came as a great surprise, for when the game was stopped owing to insufficient light, the Palace were leading by a goal to nil.

Since then the Palace have won five games against Luton, including the replay and the Cup-tie, but Luton won the two Southern League points at stake at the Palace last October, and by winning again on Saturday they gained the four points—a performance which they have not accomplished against any other club this season.

It was thought that, in view of the forthcoming Cup-tie with Everton, the Palace would not trouble very much on Saturday, and there seemed to be reasonable ground for taking this view when it became known that the visiting team included four reserves, but as a matter of fact the game was a well-contested one, and with a little luck the Palace would have equalised in the last quarter of an hour.

That the Glaziers were in earnest was seen at the very commencement, for although Luton kicked off, the visitors got away by means of accurate passing, and Ledger put the finish to a pretty movement by shooting wide. Then Luton attacked, and Gittins shot over after receiving a back pass from Brown. After Barnes had had a try, Roberts put in a long shot which was well saved by Platt.

The first real chance of the match came to Barnes, when Gittins sent across and Brown headed to Barnes. The outside-left seemed to have the goal at his mercy, but disappointed hopes by shooting very wide. After Hodgkinson had tested Platt, Hogg prevented further danger by marking the man and leaving the ball to the goalkeeper. Then Barnes had another splendid chance, but again failed to take advantage of it.

Good play by Brown and Latheron ended in a centre being put in by Gittins. The goalkeeper ran out, and Barnes seemed an almost certain scorer, but the ball hit the post and rebounded, the assault being ended by Fitzpatrick, who kicked over. R. Hawkes next attracted attention by preventing Woodger from getting in a shot, and Luton were soon away again, but nothing resulted.

While endeavouring to meet a centre by Barnes, Brown was brought down, but only a corner accrued. In the play which followed Fitzpatrick centred nicely and Brown headed just over—a very good effort. At the other end a cross shot by Roberts whizzed by the upright, and the Palace did the major part of the attacking in the last few minutes before the interval.

Up to this point, Luton had had more of the play in front of goal, but with the Palace backs in such good form, had not given Hewitson a great deal of trouble. They immediately assumed the upper hand after the resumption, and within two minutes Brown had headed through from a corner. The kick was taken by Latheron, and White, Fitzpatrick, and Gittins had made attempts before the ball went to Sandy.

The Palace team next acted on the aggressive, but the ball passed behind. From the goal-kick Barnes received, and he and his partner made a brilliant run to the town end of the ground, where the outside-left transferred to Fitzpatrick. The latter shot right into the corner of the net, and Luton were two goals to the good.

But the visitors were not down-hearted. Judged by their Cup-tie record, they are about the pluckiest team in the country, and they certainly played up well on Saturday. Platt had to be smart to save a shot by Woodger, and a little later a corner was forced off R. Hawkes. Platt jumped out to clear, but fisted the ball up, and Astley headed through.

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Shortly afterwards Astley was getting very dangerous when McCurdy rushed in and conceded a corner. In the subsequent play Brown received when between the backs, and sent in a flying shot, which Hewitson saved. Woodger next experienced hard lines in heading over a centre from the right wing, and play again being transferred to the other end Brown almost scored, Hewitson just saving while on his knees.

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Gittins showed up well in the concluding stages with one or two deserving attempts, but the visitors seemed to be rather more likely to score in this part of the game, and the result was in doubt right up to the finish. As a matter of fact, the Glaziers did get an offside goal and they forced one or two corners, including one given by Platt, who knocked the ball up so that it fell on the top of the net.

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Fitzpatrick was fouled just outside the penalty area, as Bob Hawkes had been earlier in the game, but it did not lead to anything particularly noteworthy, and when Mr. Fallowfield blew his whistle for the last time the wearers of the red-and-blue shirts were attacking.

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Neither side had any cause to grumble about the result. The play of Needham, Roberts, Woodger, and Astley, who have been praised so much for the way in which they have acquitted themselves in the Cup-ties, was watched with especial interest, and they were undoubtedly the smartest men in the visiting team.

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Needham greatly pleased the critics by his play in the second game with Brentford, when he took the ball up the field on several occasions and passed along the ground to his forwards. He only did this once on Saturday, and it was a neat piece of work, but a certain amount of risk attaches to such play. Roberts and Woodger on the left wanted a lot of watching, and had the right wing been as smart, the result would probably have been different.

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Although as a whole Luton were the better team, two or three of the home players have been in much better form. Hogg performed very well, and McCurdy was also good, while no fault could be found with the halves, but the forwards showed little combination, each man more or less going on his own. After seeing Saturday's game, I am more than ever convinced that a great mistake was made when Gittins and Fitzpatrick were called upon to change places, whilst Latheron is certainly very far from being an improvement on Murphy.

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