

LUTON v. PORTSMOUTH.

Played at Luton on Saturday. Result :—

Luton 3 goals.

Portsmouth 1 goal.

With the exception of Hogg, whose place was taken by Jackson, Luton had the same team out as on Friday. Portsmouth were at full strength, their team being—Cook; Thomson and Walker; Digweed, Buick, and Macdonald; Bainbridge, Dalrymple, Kirby, Hunter, and Buckle. Referee, Mr. A. J. Barker.

More than usual interest attached to this match from the fact that Portsmouth were running a neck-and-neck race with Fulham for championship honours and were therefore very keen on winning. The weather was again beautifully fine, and this and the attractiveness of the fixture accounted for a very good attendance, there being some seven thousand spectators.

With the ground very hard—much too hard to make it pleasant for the players—the pace

throughout was wonderfully fast, and the game was full of incident from start to finish. As at Watford the previous day, Luton, after a little preliminary work in midfield, made a dash for goal, and a corner was conceded them. This was placed by Warner, and following a header by Pickering, the ball went out to Gittins, who let fly without a moment's hesitation, and Cook was easily beaten.

The return to the half-way line on this occasion was but a mere matter of form, for the Luton forwards at once made a combined rush, and Gittins again getting possession, sent in a terrific shot from fully twenty yards' range. Cook managed to reach the ball but could not stop its course, and so within less than five minutes the home team were two up.

A minute or two later Gittins seemed likely to repeat the performance, but he gave the opportunity to Warner, who took the ball behind. Platt having cleared well from an attack by Portsmouth, Luton went down the field in good style, and a shot from Brown brought Cook to his knees, while directly afterwards another terrific drive by Gittins just missed the post.

Jackson then gave the visitors a corner, and McCurdy saved a certain goal by heading out from under the bar. The Luton left wing transferred to the other end, and Barnes put across the mouth of goal, but Brown, who was on the run, missed the ball, which only wanted a touch to send it in the net. From another centre by Barnes, a shot by Gittins just shaved the upright. Following this, Portsmouth set up a hot attack on the home goal, and Platt making a dash and failing to clear, there was an exciting scrimmage under the bar, but eventually the ball was hooked out. Portsmouth set up strong claims for a goal, but the referee, who was right on the spot, was emphatic in disallowing it. Apparently Buick said something more forcible than polite, for he was called on one side by Mr. Barker, whose gestures showed that he was not in the mood to stand nonsense.

Probably the incident had a disturbing influence upon the presiding official, however, for he was never so good afterwards, and certain of his decisions, though not of a momentous character, were decidedly open to question, while some palpable infringements entirely escaped his notice. Portsmouth had a full share of the play up to the interval, but the shooting of the forwards was very erratic, and several openings were absolutely thrown away.

Early in the second half, when Brown got clear from a return by Jackson, he was pushed off the ball by Walker, but the referee took no heed, whilst a little later Sandy was given offside near the half-way line when both backs were yards nearer their own goal. Two or three times Portsmouth came near scoring, and once Platt saved grandly after Jackson had let Kirby in.

Luton also had hard luck, for Barnes, by shooting instead of placing to the other forwards, nullified a splendid opening, and from a pass by Pickering, Brown shot over when he had the goal at his mercy. Brown failed again with another attempt, and then the three inside men making a rush, Sandy had the satisfaction of scoring a fine goal. Luton still kept up the pressure, but without effect, and the visitors at last getting away, Bainbridge put the ball across, it was returned from the left to the centre, and Kirby scored with a nice shot.

Portsmouth tried again, but Platt brought off one or two grand saves, and the game ended in a brilliant victory for Luton by 3 goals to 1. The win was no fluke, the homesters succeeding on their merits. The visitors played very smart football, but they overdid the passing business and so threw away opportunities which they had worked hard for. The half-backs however, were decidedly at fault in allowing Brown so much rope, for he was always worrying the backs, who found the Luton forwards a bigger handful than they knew how to manage.

Gittins was in splendid form and with just a little luck he would have done the hat trick. Pickering also played a great game, and he and Barnes were always on the move, but Warner was quite off song. The halves all played well, Jones again proving himself to be a thoroughly good man, and the three were much more successful than the halves on the other side. McCurdy got badly shaken up during the game, but played well nevertheless, and Jackson was probably none the less effective for being a trifle wild in his kicking, for it served to take the Portsmouth forwards off their game. Platt was smartness itself in goal.