

Southern League

LUTON v. PLYMOUTH ARGYLE.

Played at Luton on Saturday. Result :—

Luton 3 goals.

Plymouth Argyle..... 2 goals.

The teams were as follow :—

Luton—Platt; Jackson and McCurdy; F. Hawkes, Jones, and R. Hawkes; Latheron, Gittins, Brown, Pickering, and Barnes.

Plymouth—Sutcliffe; Noon and Orrell; Smith, Clark, and Fullerton; Garratt, Briercliffe, McLaughlin, Wright, and Burch.

Referee, Mr. A. J. Barker (Stoke).

Luton never enjoyed a much luckier win than on Saturday. Practically from start to finish Plymouth played the brighter and better football, and after gaining a well-deserved lead, were eventually beaten by the odd goal in five. So far as one could see, however, it was entirely owing to misfortune that the visitors had victory snatched from them, for it was only during Sutcliffe's absence that Luton managed to equalise, and but for his injury it is doubtful if the winning goal would have been scored.

As a matter of fact, the game was regarded as rather a soft thing for Luton, and the five thousand spectators who assembled to see it felt an easy confidence in Luton's ability to win. Plymouth have been doing very poorly this season, and Luton having drawn on the Westerners' ground, were justified in looking upon Saturday's encounter as something in the nature of a foregone conclusion, especially as the Argyle directors, at their wits' end to know what to do, had been compelled to make sweeping changes in the team.

It was therefore with considerable surprise that the spectators saw Plymouth, kicking off against the wind, have all the best of the opening exchanges, and they were inclined to flatter themselves that it was only a flash in the pan. Pickering once raised hopes by a spirited attempt to get through, but as is so often the case with him, he failed at the last moment, and later on when Brown, well placed, received the ball from Latheron, he could not get in his kick properly, and the shot went high over.

A corner for Luton proved fruitless, and Brown afterwards shot just over the bar. Then Luton had their first bit of luck. Burch, a very promising amateur on the outside-left, sent the ball dangerously across the goal, and Platt just got to it and followed it out in an attempt to clear. While he was away, Garratt sent in a nice shot, but McCurdy, who seems to have a knack of turning up in goal at the right moment, got his foot to the ball just in time to prevent it passing over the line.

After another promising but futile effort by Pickering, Briercliffe threatened to open the Plymouth account, but McCurdy took the ball off his toe and so saved the situation. Garratt and Bob Hawkes next showed up prominently at different ends, and from a free kick, Pickering received and put in a shot which missed the bar by inches.

In a further attempt by Plymouth, Briercliffe lost a splendid chance by shooting wide, and then Platt had all his work cut out to save from Garratt, dropping the ball at the first attempt but recovering possession before anyone could get near him. Luton replied with a corner, and this being placed by Barnes, Jones headed through quite out of Sutcliffe's reach, and thus had the satisfaction of scoring the first goal ever obtained by Luton against the old International.

The lead was obtained by the homesters after thirty-eight minutes' play, and they lost it four minutes later. It was a wonder they held out as long as that, for before the equaliser came Platt ran out a long distance, only to find Garratt getting on to the ball first, and had not McCurdy once more dropped back into goal, the outside-right must have scored. Directly afterwards, however, the visitors forced a corner, and the ball going out to Smith, that player sent in a shot which struck the inside of the upright and glanced off into goal.

Thus the teams crossed over on level terms. Early in the second half, Luton showed a disposition to force matters, and several opportunities came their way. Once Brown had a fine chance, but passed to Pickering, who was offside. Barnes next made a splendid opening, only to throw it away by passing behind the other forwards and so enabling the Plymouth halves to clear. Gittins maintained the excitement, and would probably have succeeded in scoring had not Orrell pushed him off the ball. It looked like a case for a penalty, but was not so regarded by the referee.

Then the visitors took up the running, and met with unexpected success, Smith scoring with a clipping shot from quite twenty yards' range. Probably Platt's view was obstructed, and I doubt if he saw the ball until too late to get to it. The Luton custodian, however, made a magnificent save a few minutes later, when the ball came across from the right, and McLaughlin had a clear run. Platt dashed out, stooped down and stopped the ball with his left hand, and then cleared—a performance for which he was deservedly applauded.

Following upon other attacks by Plymouth, Barnes went away in grand style, and his centre gave Latheron the easiest of chances, but the outside-right muffed it badly. Sutcliffe, in an effort to avert the danger, had the misfortune to dislocate his finger, and was taken off the field by his trainer. Dr. Rose happened to be present, and after being attended to by that gentleman, Sutcliffe was able to resume his place.

In the meantime, however, Luton had equalised the scores. A free kick was given for a foul on Barnes, and Bob Hawkes placing, Orrell, who had dropped back into goal, was unable to keep out a shot from Jones, though he prevented it finding the net. Mr. Barker gave a goal without a moment's hesitation, and emphatically declined to listen to Plymouth's protests.

Sutcliffe came on again immediately the goal was scored, and there was then a big struggle for the lead. A dash by McLaughlin, who was yards offside but was allowed to go on, seemed likely to give victory to the visitors, but again Platt made a rush for the ball, and again he succeeded in frustrating the centre-forward's intentions. Luton next had an abortive corner, and then Noon altogether missing a centre from Pickering, gave Brown a chance which he was not slow to take. Sutcliffe tried to cover the failure of the right

back, but failed, and the ball rolled just inside the post.

From a centre by Latheron, Luton came wonderfully near scoring again, Sutcliffe falling with the ball before him. Pickering, who was on the spot, seemed a certain scorer, but was circumvented by the fallen custodian, who managed to throw the ball out of danger. It was the last incident of note, and Luton were thus returned the winners by 3 goals to 2.

As already stated, the gaining of the points was about the only satisfaction that Luton could get out of the game, for on the play they were decidedly the inferior team. Plymouth played very smart football, their passing being quick and clean, their right wing especially showing excellent form. But then Briercliffe, who has played against Luton for the Arsenal, always was a good man.

The Luton forwards, on the other hand, were about as bad as they could be. The left wing generally finished up weakly, while the right showed no sort of understanding at all. Latheron played a very fair individual game, but when he gets the ball his only idea is to centre, and his partner has to fare for himself. Whether it was because of that that Gittins played so badly, I cannot say, but the inside-right certainly never showed worse form. He ran about all over the field, and more than once was seen operating on the extreme left. No fault could be found with the defence, except that Jackson, while very energetic, was also very erratic.

A singular feature about the first four goals was that they were obtained by a couple of half-backs, Jones being responsible for the two obtained by Luton and Smith scoring those for Plymouth.