

FOOTBALL NOTES AND NEWS.

By "Grasshopper."

SOUTHERN LEAGUE.

LUTON v. PLYMOUTH ARGYLE.

LUCKY WIN FOR THE HOME TEAM.

It is a long time since Luton had such luck as on Saturday afternoon, in their Southern League engagement with Plymouth Argyle, when they succeeded in winning by 3-2. If the score had been reversed, it would have scarcely represented the play—a fact the most partial home supporter can scarcely help conceding. On Saturday we had another illustration of how the better team sometimes meets with vexatious misfortune.

For the home side, Jackson was once more at back in place of Hogg, while Jones appeared for White at centre-half. In the front line Warner stood down for Latheron, while Pickering again partnered Barnes, with "Sandy" in his usual place. "Bob" had once more charge of the team. The Argyle were represented by: Sutcliffe; Noon, Orrell; Smith, Clark, Fullerton; Garratt, Briercliffe, McLaughlan, Wright, and F. Burch.

Having won the toss, the visitors were set to play against a stiff breeze, and when McLaughlan kicked off there were about 5,000 spectators present. It did not take long to prove which was the better side. No sooner was the ball started than the Plymouth front string made boldly towards Platt, and Garratt finished up by sending in a fine centre right across the goal mouth. Fortunately McCurdy cleared. After acting on the defensive for some time, the Blues, thanks to the efforts of their Captain, were able to transfer play, and Barnes put in a shot which all but found the net. Then Noon came to the rescue and relieved, and the game proceeded in mid-field.

The local defence was being severely pressed, but a series of offsides helped to stop the progress of the Greens. However, Briercliffe made a dangerous rush, and McCurdy did a splendid piece of work in clearing. The game now ruled more even, and play was always interesting, the long passing of the visitors being a fine feature. Play, too, became faster, but the defence on both sides had found their "legs," and the pressure on the two custodians was somewhat relieved. Cittins missed Luton's really first chance; the inside right had a fine opportunity, but his shot was most erratic. Once more the visitors made a desperate attempt to find the net, but Garratt's final effort was a failure. At the other end Pickering threatened danger; after first miskicking, Noon just robbed the Luton man as he was about to shoot an almost certain goal. Fullerton was compelled to give a corner, and so well-placed was the flag-kick by Latheron, that the leather literally danced on the cross-bar, being only got away with difficulty. Brown, too, shortly afterwards shot over, missing by a few inches.

For some time after this the Blues were kept entirely on the defensive. The backs were severely penned in, and Platt was in fine form, and saved a "header" from Briercliffe at close quarters. He also handled more than once, without making a mistake, while McCurdy stopped a fine shot on the goal line. Things were being made hot for Luton, but while the visitors were attacking with spirit their shooting was at times a little faulty. Then Luton had a brief look in, both Brown and Pickering making attempts. Plymouth rather threw away a corner. The centre was well placed, and Jones succeeded in heading into the net, giving Sutcliffe no chance to clear. This was a gratifying result for the home supporters, as this was the first time Luton had ever scored against Sutcliffe; but such a reverse only put Plymouth on their mettle, and a few minutes later, after Platt had repelled a dangerous shot, he was well beaten by Smith, who thus brought the scores level, ten minutes from the interval.

Resuming after half-time, Jones opened the attack for the home side by shooting over, while Sutcliffe had to save from a free kick close in. Then the visiting custodian ran out and cleared from Gittins. But Luton had gone so fast without achieving any tangible result, that they moderated down, when the Argyle forwards opened the attack in deadly earnest. They gave the home defence no rest, and it was fortunate that the home half-line was in such fine form, because Jackson was often far from being safe, and McCurdy had frequently more than he could quite manage. Eventually, from long range, Smith sent in a rasping shot, which went right into the corner of the net.

After a spell of fast and interesting play, Sutcliffe met with an accident. Luton were attacking; Barnes sent across a fine centre, and the ball came to Latheron, who missed a splendid chance. Sutcliffe rushed out and cleared, and in doing so dislocated one of his fingers, which necessitated his temporary retirement from the field. During Sutcliffe's absence one of the backs kept goal. This weakening of the Plymouth defence gave the Blues the advantage, and seeing their opportunity they were determined to "make hay while the sun shone." Barnes was fouled, and Luton were awarded a free kick. The shot was well placed, and Jones equalised, just as Sutcliffe was returning to his charge. The visitors appealed against the decision, but there was no doubt the ball was well in the net before the back cleared, and the point had to stand. It must have been mortifying to Sutcliffe to find that during his absence the home side had equalised, but even had he been at his post, it is doubtful if would have done any better than his deputy, because Jones's shot required some stopping.

For the remainder of the game the Greens had the upper hand, but luck was dead against them. Luton made a weak attempt, but gave no trouble. McLaughlan broke clean away, easily beating the backs. Platt had expected McCurdy to clear, but the left back missed, and things looked critical. The home goalie thereupon rushed out, and succeeded in picking the ball up off McLaughlan's toe—but what a bit of luck! The visitors were given offside once or twice. From one of the free kicks Brown went boldly up, Sutcliffe ran out, but the ball went off him into the net. This was a gift for Brown, but it was enough to give the home side the lead, and it row being close on time they had no difficulty in keeping it to the end.

Result: Luton 3 goals, Plymouth Argyle, 2.

Luton on Saturday were not in their best form. The forwards were unsatisfactory. Though Brown gave his partners many openings they failed to take advantage of them, both Gittins and Pickering being conspicuous offenders in this respect. Latheron does very well at centreing, but seems to fail at the critical moment. Barnes performed creditably, but Jones was not at all in his element at centre-half, and Jackson did not inspire confidence. Plymouth had the play—Luton the luck.

The match reminded one of the first game played on the new ground. The Argyle were also the visitors on that occasion, and that match will be remembered for a long time. Because from every point of view it was one of the finest games that has since been played on the Ivy-road enclosure. Both teams were in the pink of form—they were equal to each other in all respects—and the result was a magnificent exhibition. The match ended in a pointless draw. However, later on at Plymouth Luton lost by two goals to love. This season, away, the Blues also made a pointless draw with the Argyle.