

Southern League

LUTON v. PORTSMOUTH.

Played at Luton on Saturday. Result:—

Luton	2 goals.
Portsmouth	nil.

Teams:—

Luton—Platt; Hogg and Dimmock; Jones, White, and R. Hawkes; Rigate, F. Hawkes, Rankin, Moody, and Walders.

Portsmouth—Philip; Thomson and Warner; Digweed, Bowman, and McDonald; Birtles, Bellamy, Kirby, Wilson, and Dix.

Referee, Mr. T. Armitt (Leek).

This game between the two bottom teams on the Southern League table was not productive of any brilliant football, although the exchanges were fairly interesting. Luton were the better team taking the game all through, but Portsmouth ought to have scored on more than one occasion.

It will be noticed that McCurdy was absent from the home team for the first time in a Southern League match this season, and his absence was due to a slight injury. Hogg took the right back position and was partnered by Dimmock, who played so well that McCurdy was not missed very much. Two or three changes were made in the Portsmouth team, which was not at full strength.

Portsmouth were the first to get away, but Dimmock relieved, and after good work by Jones, Rankin put in a shot which Philip saved. A similar fate met a drive by the Luton captain, and as the result of a splendid piece of play by F. Hawkes, Rigate shot just over when he should have centred.

The Portsmouth right wing next made the running, and the home defence had an anxious time, but the ball went out of play. An injury to Bellamy caused that player to leave the field for a few minutes, during which time Portsmouth played four forwards. A free kick for what the referee adjudged to be a foul on Rigate was saved by the goalkeeper, and then Rigate sent wide.

A long shot by Rankin tested the capabilities of the Portsmouth custodian, who a moment later only just managed to turn the ball round the post from a header by Walders. Kirby then received when between the Luton backs, but threw away his opportunity by shooting very wide.

Two good attempts by Moody were applauded by the spectators—the first was saved, and the second was only a few inches wide. A free kick for a foul on Rankin just outside the penalty area did not avail anything. The Portsmouth forwards were getting away nicely when Hogg kicked into touch, and a corner kick directly afterwards was not improved upon.

At the other end good centres were put in from both wings, and the goalkeeper had to be very much on the alert to save a long drive by R. Hawkes. F. Hawkes was making tracks for goal soon after this when he was fouled. The referee, as was expected, stopped play, but awarded a free kick to Portsmouth, as in his opinion the Luton inside-right was offside.

Shortly before the interval Walders put across a centre which the backs failed to get at, and it seemed likely that F. Hawkes would score, but he was not near enough to steer the ball into the desired haven. So at half-time there was no score, although Luton had performed a good deal of aggressive work, while Platt, on the other hand, had not been tested by a single shot.

Portsmouth were more prominent after the resumption. An attack by Luton having ended in a goal kick, Kirby got very dangerous, and Hogg gave a corner. This was followed by another, conceded by Platt, and then Dix, the outside-left, had a splendid chance, having only Platt to beat, but shot tamely, and the ball went yards wide.

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Wilson, the inside-left, next tried to make the running, and Dimmock kicked out. A free kick was next given against the Portsmouth goalkeeper for carrying the ball, and then play was stopped on account of an injury to Rankin. It was about this time when the first goal of the match was scored.

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Play had been in progress for a quarter of an hour after the interval when Rigate put across a centre. The Portsmouth goalkeeper attempted to get his fists to the ball, but Moody's head was there first, and the sphere went into the net, just scraping the under side of the bar over the custodian's head.

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The second goal was scored two or three minutes later. Rankin had just come on the field again, after a short absence, when he obtained possession and sent in a long shot. The ball rebounded from the bar, and F. Hawkes, who was well up, had no difficulty in scoring.

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Directly after this Kirby had a very fine chance to score. He was standing only a few yards from goal and if he had steadied himself must almost certainly have scored, but he met the ball as it came from the left wing, and it went from his foot high over the bar. After this, good shots by Birtles and Wilson were well saved by Platt.

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About this time, however, Platt made a little mistake. He dropped the ball in attempting to clear, and was rather fortunate in recovering it. Kirby next attracted attention with a straight run for goal, and Dimmock did about the only thing possible by back-heeling to Hogg, who was a yard or two behind the centre-forward.

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Portsmouth really did deserve to score in this part of the game. For several minutes they kept up a bombardment, but the Luton backs and halves were in such good form that Platt was not severely troubled. At length the Luton forwards got away again, and Moody almost headed another goal. The last

incident was another drive by R. Hawkes, who sent only just wide.

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The game altogether was of a very poor description, and one could not help sympathising with the pathetic plea of a leathern-lunged gentleman who, finding the usual exhortations unavailing, at length uttered the almost despairing cry, "Play up, somebody." During the first half, at any rate, it would have been a relief to see either side going all out, for the efforts of the Portsmouth forwards were feebleness itself, while there was a sad lack of energy on the part of some of the Luton men.

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I don't know that any of the players enhanced their reputations. Jones played with all his customary enthusiasm, and if he could only inoculate one or two of the forwards with some of his spirit, then we might find "business beginning to hum." I am convinced there is quite enough ability in the team to lift Luton out of its present unfortunate position, and what the directors have to do is to discover a means of bringing this ability more fully into use. The defence is all right; it is the attack that still needs livening up.

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When Portsmouth visited Luton near the end of last season, they were in the running for championship honours, and Luton were steadily climbing up the League ladder. Then, after a great game, Luton were victorious by 3 goals to 1. On Saturday, the home team again won by two goals, but, oh, what a difference in the displays given!

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