

The Southern League.

CRYSTAL PALACE v. LUTON.

Played at the Crystal Palace on Saturday.

Result:—

Crystal Palace 2 goals.

Luton nil.

The teams were as under:—

Crystal Palace—Johnson; Collins and Needham; Innerd, Ryan, and Brearley; Garrett, Haywood, McGibbon, W. Lawrence, and Woodger.

Luton—Platt; Dimmock and McCurdy; F. Hawkes, Jones, and R. M. Hawkes; Brown, Haycock, Menzies, Moody, and Stansfield.

Referee, T. Kyle (Aylesbury).

Luton were at full strength for this match. The Glaziers, like Luton, have been troubled with injuries, and it was an unfamiliar forward line which represented them; indeed, the only old player was Woodger, and he occupied quite a new post at outside-left.

The Palace pitch is not an ideal one if there has been any rain about, and it has usually been in a bad state when Luton have played there, but on Saturday it was in magnificent condition, and the only handicap was the brilliance of the sun, which, as the Luton skipper lost the toss, was faced by them. The opening went in favour of Luton, and the first shot at goal came from the foot of Menzies, who snapped up a clever pass from F. Hawkes and let drive in promising style, but unfortunately the direction was faulty, and the ball passed the goal-line several yards wide of the upright.

At the opposite end Garrett and Haywood managed to slip both Bob and McCurdy, and as a result the Luton goal was endangered for quite a couple of minutes. No player could manage to get a clean kick at the ball, and it bobbed about from one to another until it was ultimately cleared quite as much by good luck as good judgment. A long shot was put in all along the ground by Brearley, but, as was the case with Menzies, this attempt was too wide, and nothing more than a goal kick resulted.

Brown, in making one of his runs, was fouled by Brearley, and the free kick led up to the best shot of the match at this stage. Following the place kick F. Hawkes gave the ball to Brown, who, swerving into goal, put in a regular pile-driver which appeared a certain goal, but Johnson just managed to get to the ball and touch away, amid loud applause from the local spectators.

The game was barely ten minutes old when quite a surprise goal to the Palace came along. Luton had been pressing, and naturally most of the players were in the home quarters. But McGibbon, ready to take advantage of a chance return, was standing well up on the Luton backs, when Ryan punted the ball up the field. McGibbon made a dash for it, but it appeared quite as easy for McCurdy either to reach the ball or bundle into the Palace centre, and therefore it was quite a surprise when McGibbon was observed to be making a clear run through. Platt, noticing this, ran forward, but McGibbon, although well outside the penalty area, took a shot which whizzed by Platt, who was yards out by this time, and found its resting-place in the net. It was a characteristic goal by the soldier, but he should never have been allowed the opportunity.

In mid-field work McGibbon was not seen to advantage, but he was continually on the pounce for a shot at goal, and the crowd seemed to expect a goal every time he got his foot to the ball. Fortunately for Luton he was not always so sure, and he made a sad mess of an even better opening than the one mentioned above within a couple of minutes by shooting yards wide. Moody came through with the ball at his toe, and Johnson, greatly daring, came out and met him, and just succeeded in blocking the opening, but at the expense of a corner kick. This was splendidly placed, and Johnson earned the applause of the crowd by the manner in which he punched the ball away with all three of Luton's inside forwards surrounding him.

It was indeed a near thing. But Luton's luck seemed dead out at this point, for another fine shot by Menzies a minute later went very near to the upright as it flashed over the line. Stansfield also caused Johnson to fall on his knees to save a hard cross attempt, but again the home goalkeeper was equal to the emergency. Coming down, Stansfield worked well into goal and drove the ball in with terrific force. Johnson, however, just stopped it, and although it was again returned he punched away, and thereby prevented what appeared a certain equaliser.

It was now the turn of the Palace, and Woodger made a dash for a clear run into goal, but Platt ran out and met him practically at the moment of his reaching the ball. Platt kicked the ball into touch and bundled into Woodger with the same effort. The game was stopped to enable Woodger to recover from the impact, but he was simply winded, and soon resumed playing. The interval was fast approaching when another burst by Stansfield led up to a fine chance of making matters level. The ball came to Haycock, who had no one but Johnson facing him, but Luton's inside-right made bad use of this opening, and placed the ball wide, and the teams retired with only one goal scored at half-time.

Luton were awarded a free kick for a foul on Menzies, but Moody's attempt at goal was a very tame effort, and Johnson cleared without difficulty. A similar incident caused by a bad foul on Moody just outside the penalty area resulted in a clever push through on the part of R. Hawkes, who gave Brown a chance, but the referee blew his whistle for hands against Brown, and the place kick cleared the Palace lines. In making a run down Garrett was injured, and the game was stopped for the attention of the trainer. It appeared at first that Garrett would take no further part in the game, but after standing on the line a minute he took up his position again, greatly to the relief of the spectators, who feared he had broken down with his old injury, but it proved not so bad as this, and he finished the game.

After twelve minutes' play in the second half Woodger bored his way through and put across a flying centre which touched F. Hawkes or would probably have gone over the line for a goal kick, but it struck the upright and rebounded on to Platt's shoulder, and thence through the goal. It was a very lucky point, and certainly not deserved on the play, for Luton were at least holding their own in mid-field.

Quite the best shot of the match was one from Bob Hawkes, and how Johnson saved it even he would hardly be able to tell, for the ball was travelling like a shot from a gun just inside the upright when Johnson literally fell on it and brought off the most sensational save of the match. Luton were now having much the better of the game, and Haycock had one of the easiest chances imaginable, but he made poor use of it, and Johnson gave a corner. From this Luton pressed, but again luck and good judgment by Johnson were against them, and nothing resulted. Johnson saved shots from Menzies and Stansfield without much trouble, and once more the Palace forward broke away. Garrett putting across a fine centre. Lawrence was presented with one of the easiest chances of the match, but he made a wild shot yards over Platt's head.

Returning to the attack, Luton made the running, but failed at the target badly; indeed, they had far more of the game at this stage than their opponents did at any period, but Johnson proved himself invulnerable, and is being boomed for an international cap by his admirers. Brown had a grand opportunity hereabouts, but in trying to centre, he banged the ball hard into Needham's stomach, and the game was stopped for several minutes for the latter to recover. One last attempt to notch an away goal came from Moody, but although Johnson fell, he succeeded in preventing the ball going through, and Luton were beaten pointless.

As at West Ham, the score rather misrepresents the game; indeed, a division of points would have been a truer index of the exchanges, and the Palace have Johnson to thank for at least one point. As a forward line, Luton played the prettier football, and Johnson had quite double the shots to stop to those sent in to Platt. Menzies gave his wings many splendid openings, and his only failing appears to be a certain hesitancy of going through on his own. Stansfield and Moody furnished the better wing, although Brown did not do badly, but Haycock did not feed his partner so well as Moody did.

Probably F. Hawkes was the pick of the halves, although both his comrades played well, Bob having a very tricky pair in Garrett and Haywood to deal with. Platt had comparatively little to do, while Dimmock and McCurdy were as a rule able to cope with the individual rushes of McGibbon and Co. Until Garrett was hurt, the Palace right wing were the main cause of anxiety, but Woodger makes a more effective winger than one would suppose. McGibbon is little more than an opportunist, but his record proves one such is very useful in attack. Lawrence was the weakest forward on the Palace side, while next to Johnson the most effective member of the defence was their Carlisle recruit, Collins, at right back.