

The Southern League.

EXETER BEAT LUTON.

DESPERATE FINISH.

LUTON BETTER STAYERS.

A few years since it would have been thought impossible to travel close on 500 miles and play an important league game on the same day. But on Saturday Luton were able to carry out their programme in comfort, largely due to the enterprise of the Great Western Railway Company, who have done more to encourage the sport from this point of view than any other line. To reach Exeter the same day meant that Luton must travel by the 10.30 from Paddington, which does not stop until reaching Plymouth, but slips a coach at Exeter; and in order that Luton should have their lunch at a reasonable time previous to the match a special Dining Car was placed at their service, which entailed a staff of five making a special journey and returning with the team at night.

This programme was successfully carried out, and the long journey had little effect upon the players, for they went through the ninety minutes in such a manner that notwithstanding the turf was of a terribly holding character and would in the ordinary course have tried the stamina of any team to its fullest extent, Luton were going great guns at the finish and the Exeter spectators were very pleased to hear the final whistle.

This was the third journey west during four week ends and only one change has been made in the composition of the Luton eleven on either occasion and this was compulsory through Mc Curdy's injury, Folley coming into the side at Exeter. The home team were at full available strength, and the only real absentee was Parnell who met with a serious injury some weeks since. During the previous week the club had signed on Robinson for goalkeeper, and although this player was thought to have quite finished his playing career some few years ago, he did so well on the previous Wednesday he was preferred to Fletcher who has been keeping goal for the Exonians.

The ground is a peculiar one, but the home officials confessed it had never been in such a state as it presented after a few minutes play on Saturday. At the end it was almost impossible to control the ball through the sticky mud. It was practically impossible to turn on the run while the ball literally stopped dead where it pitched, and the players were quite nonplussed at times, many amusing incidents happening especially when two players were observed standing ready to receive the ball which never reached them and they simply had to laugh themselves at times.

In the first half Exeter attacked at this goal, and the Luton defence was sorely tried until they got accustomed to the curious situation, and therefore it was no surprise to find Exeter a goal up in the first ten minutes. It was a brilliant individual effort on the part of the home crack goal-getter, and he darted through the Luton defence in Corinthian style from just over the half-way line, and keeping the ball at his toe, worked right into goal and beat Platt with a fast grounder from close range, the ball going clean away from Platt into the opposite corner of the net.

There was an element of luck about the second goal scored by the home side. Bell again made the opening, and Platt coming out this time, missed his man, and he shot in the ball, but striking F. Hawkes, it looked as if the situation was saved, when McGuigan, following up, drove the ball back into the net.

In the second half Luton were seen to greater advantage, and more than held their own, and were rather unlucky in not drawing level. Menzies scored midway in this half with a grand shot, but he appeared to have quite as easy a chance at least twice afterwards, but failed to beat Robinson again. He came through in much the same manner to Bell in the first half, and it looked any odds on the equaliser, but to the joy of the crowd Robinson got to his shot, and literally saved a point for his new club as a consequence. He received quite an ovation as he came off the field.

Luton were best served by their front string, of whom Brown was a shining light in the first half, and he had hard lines with at least half a score of centres from the touch-line after getting the better of Bulcock. In the second half, he did not judge the ball quite so well, and chief danger came from the opposite wing, Stansfield continually slipping by Craig and giving Robinson many anxious moments. The match, especially in the second half, resembled a hard fought cup-tie between local rivals, and it was a gruelling time for the defence. Still Luton were not disgraced in this department, the half-back trio all showing to particular advantage. The teams were constituted as under:—

Exeter City: Robinson; Craig and Bulcock; Ambler, Chadwick and Johnson; White, Watson, McGuigan, Bell and Copestake.

Luton: Platt; Folley, Gregory; F. Hawkes, White, Jones; Brown, Haycock, Menzies, Moody and Stansfield.

Referee, Mr. T. W. Handford, London.

Fred Hawkes, who was acting as captain for the day, lost the toss for Luton, and the home attack were quickly in evidence for McGuigan nipped in and broke through straight away, giving Bell the ball in a good position, but the latter's shot proved wide of the mark, and Luton had a goal kick. For a few minutes Luton were sorely taxed to keep their opponents at bay, but eventually Haycock securing, sent Menzies through, but the Luton centre forward did not get much powder behind his shot, and Robinson had no difficulty in clearing. First corner fell to Exeter, Folley heading by an attempt from Watson, following a run by White. This was well placed, but again Folley's head came into the picture, and this time he cleverly placed the ball well down the field. Stansfield got nicely away, and dropping the ball well into the centre Menzies used his head in an attempt to beat Robinson, but the latter saved at the expense of a corner. Just here corners were pretty frequent, and not all at one end either, but none was turned to advantage. Copestake wriggled through, but Folley stuck to him all the way and so hampered his movements that he was only able to place the ball wide for a goal kick. But the game was only just over eight minutes old when Bell opened the score as described above, and the crowd literally roared with delight.

Right away from the restart Luton got down, Menzies and Haycock both getting clear of the backs with the ball in front of them, but Robinson rushed out and fell on the ball, Menzies slip-

ping right over the fallen goalie, but Robinson keeping quite cool, ultimately threw the ball away while reclining on the ground. Although the ball was certainly mostly in the Luton quarters, several times it looked likely Luton would equalise, but Robinson anticipated with splendid judgment, and he was seldom tricked up. Chadwick cut Brown up very badly on one occasion, but the referee took no notice, although Brown limped badly for some time afterwards.

Exeter appealed very strongly for a penalty when McGuigan fell in the mud, but the referee properly judged it was the result of the treacherous turf, and not foul intent which caused the mishap. The ball hung about the Luton goal for some time, and it was not until Watson sent the ball by for a goal-kick that the pressure was relieved. Eight minutes before the interval, however, a second goal came along. Bell was observed to be making tracks, and Hawkes called Platt out, but he did not get to the ball before Bell shot in. The ball struck Fred Hawkes in its flight, or it must have been a goal right away, but unfortunately it rebounded into play clear of a Lutonian, and McGuigan rushing up drove it through an open goal, Platt not being able to get back in time. The ball was again put through by Bell, but this time he was right under the bar, and the referee gave him offside. This, therefore left the score at half time:

Exeter City 2 goals, Luton nil.

Stansfield was quickly on the spot after the restart, but Robinson saved finely; still it was soon evident the result was not sure for Luton were doing by far more pressing, or rather Exeter were doing less, which is the truer representation, for as recorded above Luton were often troubling Robinson even before the interval. There was an exciting incident when Robinson dropped on a shot which he could not get rid of before the Luton inside men were swarming round, and the home custodian stuck to the ball with grim determination, and he finally wriggled himself clear and threw away. During the melee Robinson was kicked on the head apparently, but after a little attention he took up his post again.

A breakaway by White looked very dangerous as his centre travelled right across the goal and just missed the upright. In an endeavour to turn this to advantage several players literally threw themselves at the ball, and two or three were found lying near the goal post as the ball travelled wide. Bell was injured the most, and needed the trainer's help before he could resume playing. Platt brought off a couple of good saves from shots by Bell, and then Luton took up the attack once more. Stansfield cleverly tricked his man and running clear dropped the ball beautifully in the centre, where Menzies netted with a cross drive from a crowd of players, thus reducing the lead. It was now anybody's game, and Menzies should have equalised when he got a pass from Brown just afterwards, but in meeting the ball he really turned it away from goal, when well placed for scoring. Again he got clear on his own, but Robinson just punched the shot from under the bar, when it seemed nothing could prevent a score.

It was a ding-dong struggle right up to the finish, and once it looked likely Exeter would increase their lead for a shot from McGuigan clearly beat Platt, but went just wide for a goal-kick. Still most of the play was at the opposite end of the field, and Robinson brought off save after save in brilliant style. Luton were attacking when the referee put his whistle to his mouth, Stansfield only just failing to reach the ball when Craig rushing up, kicked it into touch near the corner flag, and the ball was not brought back into play, the signal to stop coming as the ball went over the line. Result:—

Exeter City 2 goals, Luton 1.