

The Southern League.

LUTON v. EXETER.

Played at Luton on Saturday. Result:—

Exeter 2 goals.
Luton nil.

Teams:—

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

Exeter—Robinson; Craig and Crelley; Ambler, Tierney, and Wake; Parnell, Watson, McGuigan, Bell, and Copestake.

Referee, Mr. A. T. Randles (Coventry).

"Hard luck!" These words were spoken by many people as they left the Town Football Ground at the conclusion of the match on Saturday. The general opinion was that Luton had experienced hard luck, for although having two-thirds of the play, they were two goals to the bad at the finish. And this at a time when, from a financial point of view, it is absolutely essential that the Club should be winning matches.

Luton started well, and in the first few minutes Robinson, the ex-Derby County and Southampton goalkeeper, brought off two or three remarkable saves from Haycock. The Exeter goal had quite a number of marvellous escapes before the interval, but owing partly to injuries to Brown and Gregory, Luton did not show up quite so well in the second half. In the first ten minutes of this period Exeter obtained two goals, and then, to all intents and purposes, the game was ended.

Several times during the second half when a Luton forward got within shooting distance of goal, he found quite a forest of legs in front of him. Haycock was still the most prominent forward so far as shooting was concerned, but the line as a whole spent far too much time in needless artistry, their methods forming a striking contrast to those adopted by the quintette on the other side.

It is not a pleasant task when—to use a common expression—the Club is in a bad way, to adversely criticise the players, but it is a disagreeable necessity. Want of luck generally means want of pluck, but in this case it means a lack of proper method. The fact that in the last six matches the team has only been credited with one goal, is sufficient evidence that something is wrong. What is wanted is more dash—and plenty of it.

Having kicked off with these preliminary remarks, let us devote some attention to the details of the match. Despite the fine weather not more than four thousand people saw the start—a not very encouraging sign of the popularity of the game just now. They did not witness much that was calculated to arouse enthusiasm, but a mighty shout went up when Platt saved a penalty for what may or may not have been an offence on the part of F. Hawkes.

For once in a way the Luton captain won the toss, but this carried with it little or no advantage. In the first minute Jack Robinson swooped down on a low shot from Haycock and fisted out. Another attempt by the inside-right resulted in a corner, which was taken by Brown, and Stansfield narrowly missed scoring. A flag kick was also taken by the outside-left, and once more the custodian saved from Haycock.

The same player headed over from a free kick taken by Brown. Then the visitors broke away for the first time, but Parnell ran the ball over the goal-line. A minute later the Exeter outside-right, who proved to be the shining light of the line, put in a shot which Platt saved just in time. Yet another effort by Haycock, who received from Moody, resulted in Robinson touching the ball over.

Exeter obtained a similar advantage at the other end, but Luton were soon on the aggressive again. Fred Hawkes put in a shot which seemed likely to score, and Robinson threw himself at the ball. It went a few inches wide, however. Parnell was again prominent just afterwards, forcing Platt to give a corner. One of the best attempts so far was made in Luton's next attack, Brown meeting a centre by Stansfield and essaying a cross shot which grazed the top of the bar as it went over.

Brown was again unfortunate with a shot following the second of two free kicks taken by R. Hawkes. A further opportunity was presented to Haycock by Stansfield, and the inside-right kicked

the ball forward, but it curled round the upright. Then Exeter were awarded a penalty, although it really was questionable whether F. Hawkes did use his hand intentionally in preventing Bell from meeting a centre from Parnell.

The referee consulted both linesmen before awarding the penalty, which was taken by McGuigan. Platt saved, however, and the only outcome of a hot assault was a corner. Robinson next experienced a piece of good fortune. A centre from Stansfield was met by Moody, who headed. Robinson got at the ball and almost let it slip through. Haycock rushed up, but was just a little too late.

A few minutes before the interval, Brown, who was well marked by Wake, managed to get in a centre from near the corner flag. He was running very fast at the time, with Wake behind, and in trying to stop himself fell against the fence. He put one hand out to save himself from crashing into an enamel advertisement, and in so doing hurt his arm. So bad was the pain that he was carried off by Robinson, who was heartily cheered for this kindness to an opponent. Brown's wrist having been bandaged, he resumed after the interval, but of course his play suffered somewhat as the result of the accident.

Within two minutes of the resumption Exeter scored their first goal. Platt could not be blamed, for he had just saved two difficult shots when Copestake kicked the ball into the net sideways, well out of the reach of the custodian. This success had a considerable effect on the play of the Exeter men. The Luton players still did a good deal of attacking, and once when Menzies was fouled in the back there were loud cries for a penalty.

The goal which placed the issue beyond doubt was obtained a quarter of an hour after the interval. In the play following a corner the sphere went to R. Hawkes, who seemed likely to clear. He tried to trap the ball, but did not retain possession, and Watson took a flying kick which left Platt helpless. At the time Watson was outside the penalty area, but such a fast rising cross shot would have beaten almost any goalkeeper.

The subsequent play was fairly interesting, but there was never any hope that Luton would pull the game out of the fire. On one occasion Robinson only just negotiated a header by Moody. Fortunately for Exeter, none of the other Luton forwards were near enough to turn the opportunity to account. Robinson made a fine save from Haycock later on, but as a rule the Luton forwards found they were opposed to a concentrated defence, and time after time failed to get anywhere near the custodian.

In the closing stages Gregory sustained an injury, but was able to continue playing after receiving some attention from the trainer. Gregory seemed disposed to lose his temper during this part of the game, but it did not lead to anything serious. A long shot by Moody was a trifle too high, and Brown shot wide following a free kick for a foul on Stansfield. The last incident of note occurred when Jones passed back to Platt who fell and was fouled. He retained the ball until the referee awarded a free kick.

Jones, F. Hawkes, and Haycock were the most prominent men in the home side. It was unfortunate that Brown was injured, for this no doubt had some effect on the result, while in the succeeding play the tendency of the home forwards to over-elaborate was emphasised. Several times McCurdy seemed to hesitate when he should have dashed in. Robinson, Craig, Tierney, and Parnell were the best players in the Exeter team. Ambler, the right-half, throws the ball a greater distance than any other half-back in the Southern League.

Northampton sustained one of their rare defeats on Saturday, when they were beaten at Brentford by 3 goals to 1, and Crystal Palace, who are showing very poor League form now, were beaten at home by New Brompton by 2 goals to 1. The other results were:—West Ham 4, Southend 0; Swindon 5, Portsmouth 0; Leyton 5, Coventry City 0; Brighton 2, Millwall 0; Southampton 1, Bristol Rovers 0; Plymouth 2, Norwich 1; Reading 3, Watford 0. At Park Royal on Monday, Brighton beat the Rangers by 2 goals to 1, and at Coventry, Exeter were victorious by a goal to nil.

The Luton first team will be at Northampton on Saturday, whilst the Reserves will be at home to Clapton Orient; kick-off 3.30. The return match with Maidstone will be played at Luton on Wednesday next; kick-off 3.30.

The following is the League table :—

	Played	Won	Lost	Dn.	Goals		
					F.	A.	Pt.
Northampton	31	21	7	3	76	26	45
Swindon	32	18	9	5	83	34	41
Southampton	32	15	10	7	57	52	37
Exeter	33	16	12	5	50	53	37
Portsmouth	32	13	11	8	54	52	34
Millwall	31	16	13	3	51	44	33
Bristol Rovers ...	31	13	11	7	43	52	33
Plymouth A	32	13	12	7	37	40	33
New Brompton ...	31	14	14	3	38	47	31
Queen's Park R ...	30	11	11	8	40	36	30
Reading	30	8	8	14	50	44	30
Crystal Palace.....	23	10	13	10	52	51	30
Luton	32	12	15	5	46	51	29
Leyton	30	11	12	7	42	49	29
Southend United...	28	10	11	7	38	39	27
Norwich City	30	9	12	9	45	61	27
West Ham United	31	12	16	3	43	48	27
Watford	33	9	15	9	37	56	27
Brentford.....	31	10	15	6	42	40	26
Brighton	33	11	16	6	44	50	28
Coventry City ...	32	10	18	4	45	73	24

The enthusiastic support engendered by the financial position of the Town Football Club seems to have played itself out. On Friday week a meeting at the Franklin Restaurant, attended by 25 people, produced £103, but on Friday a similar meeting, at which seven people were present, only raised the total to £115. The explanation of the small increase was stated to be the fact that the Club supporters imagined the crisis to be passed

* * *

Appealing to the public in such a way must always be unsatisfactory—the Luton supporters will pay for value received, but will not, except on very rare occasions, pay for nothing. The directors will, by this time, have made up their minds that the only possible way in which the Club may be run successfully is on economic lines. The wages bill and close season expenses must be cut down, and it seems probable that this will be the course adopted next season. To pay £800 for close season expenses seems hardly justifiable for a club in Luton's position. The fact that the gate on Saturday amounted to £86 odd, of which sum only £2 10s. came from the extra shilling gate, seems to declare in no uncertain tones that for next season a different working policy must be adopted.