

Southern League.

WITH LUTON TOWN

LUTON LUCKY.

Croydon Common Complain of an Equalising Goal.

By "Vigilant."

In extremely pleasant weather a crowd of between five and six thousand gathered in the Bury Park enclosure on Saturday afternoon with expectations of seeing Luton Town fairly wipe the floor with Croydon Common, the infants of the Southern League. They were doomed to disappointment, and but for an extremely lucky incident in the last five minutes their disappointment would have been even greater. The Blues certainly did make rings round the Robins, so far as the play was concerned, for the greater part of the game, but they were a long way below their best form, and goal-scoring seemed completely out of their line. Chance after chance went begging, and when ten minutes from time a gift goal was missed it seemed odds on Croydon winning by the goal they scored early in the second half. The disgrace of sustaining the first defeat of the season at home at the hands of the team against whom Northampton ran into double figures was, however, averted by an equaliser, which was not only lucky but also open to grave doubt.

The Blues had Moody back in place of Moore at inside left, and Fry made his first appearance in the first team's goal, Jarvis having been unwell since last Tuesday. Bob Hawkes was fairly satisfied with the trial he gave his ankle in the Herts v. Middlesex match on Thursday, but he has not yet returned to the Luton team. He may go to Millwall next Saturday.

The Robins brought practically their best available side. Ryan, the centre-half secured from the Crystal Palace, was the only absentee of note. That well-known player, Boden, who has figured with Clapton Orient, Aston Villa and Reading, was utilised at centre-half, and his place at left back was taken by Taylor, who appeared at Luton in the South Eastern match on the first Saturday of the season. Alf Gittins, who was with Luton three seasons ago, also made his second appearance of the season on the Strawhattens' ground. Alex Macdonald, who left Luton at the same time as Gittins, had been selected to play on Saturday, and his portrait figured on the match card, but at the last moment he stood down for Hadley, one of his leagues of last season.

The teams, who were handled anything but satisfactorily by Mr. A. W. McQue, of Catford, were as under:

Luton.—Fry; Chapman and Hedley; F. Hawkes, Jones and Trueman; Brown, Quinn, Smith, Moody and Stansfield.

Croydon.—Hewitson; Christie and Taylor; Yenson, Boden and Hadley; Frost, Colpus, Gorman, Gittins and Hodgkinson.

Luton lost the toss, and Smith kicked off towards the Town end goal against the wind. Brown was not amongst the Blues when they took the field, but he arrived half a minute later, and was enthusiastically welcomed. In the first minute Smith got close in and struck the side of the net with a splendid shot. Then Croydon made tracks. Gorman placed out to Frost, and the latter's centre passed right across the goal. Chapman kicked weakly, and Hadley was enabled to test Fry's abilities with a beauty. It was a fast daisy-cutter, and Fry neatly picked up and cleared.

Play continued to rule round the Luton goal, and another shot by Hadley was only an inch or two too high. A huge punt by Chapman at last sent the Blues off, and Stansfield forced an unproductive corner. Jones, Smith and Brown figured in a pretty bout of passing, which completely outwitted the Robins' defence. Brown's centre was, however, intercepted by Christie. A fast run to the other end saw Gorman almost get clean through, Trueman saving splendidly at the cost of a corner. Although very fast, play was not particularly interesting. Croydon were doing the greater part of the attacking, but their shooting left much to be desired. One of the best efforts was by Frost, and Hadley was lucky to get in the way and concede a corner.

Moody, Stansfield and Smith were associated in a smart movement, which was ended by a foul on the centre-forward half a dozen yards outside the penalty area. The free kick proved of no service, Smith shooting very weakly from Jones' pass. A second free kick a moment later was made better use of by Hadley, and play for some few minutes was very exciting round the visitors' goal. The defence prevailed, but the Blues were soon back again. Quinn was prominent with a free individual effort, and was unlucky to have his shot intercepted. Smartly recovering, he essayed another but it lacked sting, and Hewitson cleared.

Stansfield was doing fine work on the left, though a little but little by his partner, who seemed quite

unable to do the right thing. A particularly clever piece of work by Harold seemed likely to be effective, but Hewitson was on the ball before Smith could do any good with it. A moment later Quinn was really brilliant. Receiving from Brown, he was badly fouled as he ran in, but he nevertheless got his shot in, and Hewitson effected a fine save against the upright. Next the inside right sent Stansfield off, but Christie's head barred the way for Harold's centre. Stansfield made another effort and struck the side of the net.

The popular outside left was again in the picture a moment later. A free kick for hands, taken by Jones, was placed out to him, and his centre was a finely-judged effort. Moody's head sent the ball across the goal, and Smith, amid great enthusiasm, captured it on the line and neatly touched it into the centre, only to see the ever-watchful Christie get into the way and deliberately kick out for a corner. The excitement was maintained for some minutes, but Christie put an end to it with a magnificent clearance.

For some minutes Croydon then monopolised the play but never became really dangerous. A fine run by Brown and Quinn came near bringing about the downfall of the visitors' goal. The ball brushed Christie's head, and Stansfield was robbed of a splendid chance by being whistled up for offside—a mistake which was very unfortunate for the Blues. Another effort by Brown resulted in a corner, and from this Stansfield got in a stinger. Its career was stopped by Christie, and from the rebound Jones hurled in another hot one, which missed the mark by inches.

Undaunted by the bad luck which was attending his grand work, Stansfield delighted the crowd with a really great run of the dodgy type. His centre was muddled, but the outside-left followed up and again landed across to the right. This time Smith seized on the pass, but had his shot beaten down, and then Fred Hawkes dashed through to the rescue and, running in to within ten yards of the goal, blazed away. It was a rare handful for Hewitson, and he did well to save it. Thoroughly determined, Fred endeavoured to put the finishing touch to a sterling piece of work, and just as he looked likely to be successful Christie appeared on the scene and got out of the difficulty by giving away a corner, from which Quinn headed by. It was quite the best piece of play during the half, and deserved a goal.

For the last few minutes of the half play was generally round the Luton goal. Boden lost no chance of potting, and was usually near the mark, and Fry also had to fist away a fine shot from Gorman. Chapman was applauded for two capital clearances, one from a centre dispatched by Frost across the goalmouth, and another from the foot of Colpus when Hedley had been well beaten. Another effort by Colpus looked nasty for Luton, but fortunately there were only Blues in the goalmouth awaiting his centre from the goalline. The right wing continued to give trouble right up to the signal for half-time, but they failed to achieve any tangible result. The last few minutes' play had seen a remarkable change in the game, but the superiority of the Blues in the earlier stages had been so pronounced that the visitors were flattered in being able to cross over with the score:

LUTON	0
CROYDON	0

Croydon were the first to show up after the restart, and Fry had all his work cut out to tip a beauty from Frost over the bar. From the corner kick Gorman headed wide. Smart work by the Blues' right wing took the ball to the other end, but Moody tested his shooting ability at too long a range to be dangerous. Hedley smartly pulled up Croydon's left and sent Stansfield off, but the most Harold could do was to force a corner. Frost slipped Hedley, but Chapman headed away an ominous-looking centre.

The first really exciting incident was provided by Moody, who worked through in really great style and shot splendidly. Hewitson saved an oblique shot close to the ground and was only just in time to clear off Quinn's foot. From this the Robins' left got going, and, to everyone's surprise, scored after seven minutes. It came from a corner, Frost coolly heading well out of the reach of Fry.

Smith made a desperate effort from the kick-off to bring about an equaliser, and Hewitson had all he could do to hold a hot left-footer. The visitors were quickly the aggressors again. Frost ran right through, but Chapman spoiled his shot, and Fry had no difficulty in saving. A free kick to Luton gave rise to some exciting moments round the Robins' goal. The backs apparently thought the ball was going out, but the energetic Smith was there and kept play going. The ball came out to Brown, but his shot was beaten down, and Fred Hawkes brought the incident to a close by shooting wide.

The hopes of the Blues' supporters were raised by Smith sending Moody through in fine style, but were promptly lowered again. Hewitson came out of goal and cornered Bert, whose shot was disappointingly wide. Luton were now pressing hard, but their attack was not at all effective. Nothing seemed to come off, and the most dangerous shot for some time was a huge kick by Hedley, which Hewitson fisted away over Smith's head.

Shortly after this the Croydon goal had a series of narrow escapes. Moody failed to trap a centre from Quinn when in a fine position. Stansfield tried to make amends, but his shot was beaten down. Harold recovered the ball and sent across to the right. Quinn seemed to be in a good position to score, but the ball came awkwardly, and his shot was yards too high. At the other end Fry made two brilliant saves. He came out, and succeeded in smothering a shot from Colpus, and was able to get back to goal in time to hand away Frost's centre.

Luton's chances of pulling the game out of the fire were gradually becoming beautifully less. They attacked with the utmost desperation, but seemed unable to press their attacks home. Smith eventually landed the ball into the net, but the whistle had just previously gone—apparently for some infringement of the laws by the Blues. Brown shot wide from a centre by Moody and Bert headed just over from a corner.

The last hope seemed to have gone, when, ten minutes before the finish a chance which it seemed impossible to miss was allowed to slip. A swinging pass from Fred Hawkes enabled Brown to achieve a lovely centre. Smith missed with his head, but in the scrimmage which followed Stansfield gained possession and, going through, seemed as if he must score. He was but three yards away, and Hewitson seemed to realise that it was impossible to avert a goal. But the unexpected happened. Taking it very coolly, Harold endeavoured to find the corner, and Hewitson almost involuntarily shot out his hand and to his astonishment and to the dismay of the crowd, he saved. The danger was not at an end, for Stansfield made an effort to atone for his failure, but the goalkeeper was too quick for him, and got the ball over the line.

The corner led to more exciting play. Hither and thither the ball was bandied about in the scrimmage, sometimes in the air, sometimes on the ground. The excited onlookers saw chances present themselves, but they were not accepted, and Hewitson eventually pounced on the ball and, rolling over, gave another corner. This was cleared, and the Blues seemed doomed to defeat, when, with less than five minutes to go, there came the luckiest equaliser one could imagine.

From another corner the ball came clear of the scrimmaging players to Quinn, who took a chance shot. It kept close to the ground, and however it found its way through the players to goal was a marvel, especially remembering the number of

earlier shots that had been luckily stopped in this way. Still, it did, and Moody, Jones and the goal-keeper all went for the ball simultaneously. What happened it was impossible to see, but while the three were on the ground Jones appeared to turn the ball into the net, and the referee pointed to the centre. The Croydon players at once set up a strong appeal, alleging that the scorer was offside and had impeded the goalkeeper, but the referee adhered to his decision, and we breathed again.

The Croydon players were evidently very annoyed with the decision, and several of them made no attempt to keep the ball in play during the few remaining minutes of the game. Luton made one or two likely runs, but the nearest approach to a goal was when the ball passed clean across from a corner gained by the visitors. Chapman managed to get it away, and the whistle went just as the Blues were getting to close quarters with the final score :

LUTON		1
CROYDON		1

COMMENTS ON THE PLAY AND PLAYERS.

The Blues were undoubtedly lucky to escape defeat in the way they did, but it would have been extremely hard lines on them if they had been beaten after the preponderating share they had of the play. The Robins are one of the poorest sides Luton have met this season, and had they shown anything like their form the Blues would have won comfortably. They never seemed to get into their proper swing, and their work near goal was something wretched.

It was a disappointing game all through, and was only prevented from becoming really flat by the pace that was maintained and the occasional flashes of brilliance exhibited. Fry acquitted himself admirably in his first Southern League game for Luton, but he did not have a great deal of trying work to do. It was noticeable how careful Hedley was to cover him as often as possible, and the old Leicester back was undoubtedly the hero of the match. He shone conspicuously at almost every minute of the game, and even improved on his display against Swindon.

The only other regular players to do themselves justice were Quinn and Stansfield. The inside right is evidently bent upon improving, and if all the forwards had reached his standard the result would have been a victory. Stansfield quite spoilt one of his best exhibitions of the season by that missed goal of his. It was a thousand pities, for Harold had been displaying such clever footwork in the field.

The rest of the team were painfully off colour. Brown and Smith were the pick. Moody seemed quite unable to do the right thing; Chapman was good and bad by turns, and the halves were a long way below the usual standard.

On the Croydon side Frost and Colpus were the cleverest of the forwards. Gittins showed us occasional glimpses of that brilliance which Lutonians know he can exhibit when he makes up his mind to, but he was altogether too lackadaisical to be of real value to his side. Boden at half was always dangerous, and Christie at back co-operated splendidly with the goalkeeper, saving him time after time. Taylor, the other back, was inclined to be dirty, and well deserved the admonishment he received from the referee.