

The Southern League.

LUTON v. CROYDON COMMON.

Played at Luton on Saturday. Result:—

Luton	1 goal.
Croydon Common.....	1 goal.

Teams:—

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

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

Referee, Mr. A. W. McQue (Catford).

Perhaps the poor quality of the play seen on the Town Ground on Saturday afternoon was due to the fact that Luton thought they had got a soft job on. Croydon occupy a lowly position in the table, and it is a matter of history that two or three weeks ago Northampton beat them by 10 goals to nil. As on other occasions when Luton have met with weak opposition, they played far below their usual form. So poorly did they play, in fact, that they only very narrowly escaped defeat.

It is true that Luton had two-thirds of the play in the first half, and that Croydon did not deserve the lead they obtained a few minutes after the interval. But although Luton had the greater part of the play, they did not inspire confidence, and it was only by a stroke of particularly good fortune that they equalised in the last two minutes. The goal which gave Luton a point will long be remembered as one of the softest scored in the Town Ground. It was the result of a long shot, and there was more than a suspicion as to its being a legitimate point.

Most referees would not have allowed the point. But truth to tell, Mr. McQue was rather weak. Another outstanding incident in the second half happened when Stansfield found himself a few yards from goal with only Hewitson to beat. The chances seemed to be about a million to one that Harold would score. Evidently he himself looked upon the issue as a certainty, for he simply kicked the ball, using very little force. Hewitson, however, put out his right arm and just cleared, giving a corner. Stansfield was as astonished as anybody when he realised what had happened.

In order to prevent any misunderstanding, let it be said at once that Harold was by no means the worst forward. As a line they lacked finish, and it was the worst game that these five men, taken as a whole, have played this season. In fairness to them, however, it must be stated that they did not receive the usual support from their half-backs, who were too much inclined to sky the ball. Hedley was very sound at back, and Fry, although suffering from nerves, did nothing for which he could be blamed. There were six thousand spectators, and the weather being fine, there was an unusual array of straw hats, considering the lateness of the season.

Luton kicked off without Brown, but he came on to the field half-a-minute later in time to see Smith shoot on to the side of the net. Croydon were not long in getting away, and Gittins was prevented from meeting a centre from the right. Fry saved a fairly long shot from the centre-half, and then Hadley shot just over. A good clearance by Chapman enabled Stansfield to get away, and he forced a corner, which Christie cleared with a huge kick, sending the ball out of the ground.

A free kick for a foul on Gittins did not lead to anything except that Hedley hurt his foot in kicking the ball up the field to his forwards. Gorman, who seemed to be offside, looked like getting through, but Trueman rushed across and gave a corner. This, like the one which followed, off Hedley, was cleared. It was a noticeable feature of the play hereabouts that the Croydon halves were fond of shooting, but generally their attempts went over.

Jones took a free kick close in, and Smith had the chance of taking a pot shot, but the ball curled out. The Luton left wing attacked, and some hard shots were tried, but each time a defender was in the way. Good play by Smith enabled Quinn to get away, but he tried to do the work on his own when he might with advantage have transferred to Moody. Another run on the Luton left looked dangerous. Smith ran in to meet the ball, but Hewitson rushed out and cleared.

Quinn then worked his way up the field and put in a shot which Hewitson saved. He was almost dispossessed by Smith, but managed to kick the ball out of play near the corner flag. A nice run by Stansfield was finished with a splendid centre. Christie headed back to him, and this time Stansfield shot on to the wrong side of the net. Some of the Croydon men were vigorous in their methods, and the referee addressed a word of caution to one of the backs.

In the succeeding play, Mr. McQue was at fault in not stopping men who were offside. Moody all but headed through from a centre by Stansfield. Smith obtained possession wide of goal, and centred, but one of the defenders cleared, giving a corner. This was followed shortly afterwards by another obtained by Moody, and led to some exciting play, a prolonged attack ending in True-man kicking over. Luton had almost monopolised play for some time, and when Croydon did get away, Gorman was given offside.

A very nice centre was put across by Brown and Moody headed. Stansfield was near enough to have a scoring chance, but he was given offside. Yet another corner fell to Luton's lot, and it produced another warm time for the Croydon defence. Stansfield deserved to score with a hard shot, but it cannoned off a back, and Jones sent wide. Stansfield tricked two opponents, and Fred Hawkes put in two shots, the second resulting in another corner, which Quinn headed wide. It was a good attempt, however.

Boden next put in a long shot, which travelled by the post. The centre-forward then tried a shot, and Jones relieved after Fry had fisted out. Chapman was applauded for rushing across and kicking out when the Croydon right wing was becoming dangerous. The visitors left made the running, and Gittins finished with a weak attempt, the ball going wide. Frost, the speedy outside right, caught the eye with a piece of good play. He went right to the goal-line, and tipped the ball backward, but none of his colleagues were near enough to take advantage of what would have been an easy chance.

Croydon were awarded a couple of corners, but did not have time to take the second before half-time. They were very fortunate to be on equal terms, for Luton had enjoyed by far the larger share of the play. The first incident in the second half was a hard shot by Frost. Fry tipped it over. From the centre Gorman tried an overhead kick, but the ball went wide. Brown was then given offside as he was meeting a pass from Smith, a decision which caused some indignation on the part of the spectators.

A hard shot from Moody caused Hewitson to fling himself at the ball, and no one was near enough to put it through. Croydon then went away on the left and forced a corner, from which Frost headed through ten minutes after the restart. Luton immediately attacked, and Smith called upon Hewitson with a hard shot. Then Frost had a turn, and he might have run in, but Chapman rushed across and tackled him just as he was shooting, the result being that Fry was able to save.

A free kick for Luton might have improved the home team's position. The backs evidently thought the ball was going out. Smith rushed them, and Brown was able to get in a shot. This was met, and F. Hawkes shot over. After Croydon had attacked, Moody received from Smith twenty yards from the visitors' goal. The inside-left was unmarked and had a good chance. He took the ball wide, however, and then shot over the corner of the goal. A huge kick by Hedley landed the ball in the mouth of goal. Hewitson fisted upwards, and play was stopped, owing apparently to a foul by Smith.

The Croydon goal then had two or three narrow escapes. Another big kick by Hedley enabled Quinn to pass to Moody, who failed to trap the ball. Stansfield's shot was beaten down, but he recovered and centred to Quinn, who was in an awkward position and shot over. Colpus found himself in the front of the Luton goal with a splendid chance, but Fry got in a kick, and a

dangerous situation was saved. At the other end a good centre from Moody was met by Brown, who shot over with considerable force when he should have centred.

Smith put the ball into the net, but the referee had blown his whistle for a foul a moment before. Some of the spectators shouted "Penalty," but the foul was committed outside the area by Smith. Brown took a corner nicely, and Moody headed over. Stansfield ought to have scored from a centre by Brown. He steadied himself about three yards from goal, but Hewitson put out his fist, and the only result was a corner, which was followed by another.

Five minutes from the finish Luton's chances seemed to have vanished. The play of the Croydon men had improved since they obtained the lead, and as the home players had failed to profit from the many chances that had come their way, it was almost hopeless to expect them to pull the game out of the fire now. But the unexpected happened. Stansfield obtained another corner, and the ball went out to Quinn, who was more than ten yards from goal. He returned the sphere, and it went into the net.

As there was quite a crowd of players in front of goal, it was impossible to see precisely what happened. The version related by Jones directly after the match was that he and Moody were in front of the goalkeeper. He kept Hewitson off and also touched the ball through. When the crowd had come away, it was seen that both Hewitson and Jones were on the ground, with the latter on top. Under the circumstances, it seemed that the goal ought never to have been allowed. The referee gave it, however. This happened two minutes before the finish, and although Croydon forced another corner there was no more scoring.

There is not much to add about the players. Fry was in goal because Jarvis was ill, and it was evident from the way in which he went about his work that he was nervous. The backs again played well up the field. Hedley was by far the better of the two. F. Hawkes was the pick of the halves, who were for once quite moderate. It is difficult to say which was the best forward. Quinn has been improving in recent matches, but he still holds the ball too long. Moody, who returned to the line after the injury sustained in the Charity Cup match at Watford, was never prominent, and the others were not in their usual form. On Saturday's play the defence is the strong part of the Croydon team, although Frost is a good outside-right. Macdonald was picked to play at left-half, but it will be seen that his place was taken by Hadley. Gittins did nothing worthy of comment.