

The Southern League.

LUTON v. EXETER CITY.

Played at Luton on Saturday. Result :—

Luton	3 goals.
Exeter City.....	1 goal.

Teams :—

Luton—Jarvis; Hedley and Potts; F. Hawkes, Jones, and R. Hawkes; Brown, Quinn, Smith, Moody, and Stansfield.

Exeter City—Crossthwaite; Crelley and Jones; Atkinson, Tierney, and Hartley; Green, Watson, Harrison, Bell, and Garside.

Referee, Mr. Pitchford (Sheffield).

For the second consecutive Saturday Luton were at home, and this time the visitors were Exeter, who came into the League last season. As the corresponding fixture last season resulted in a win for Exeter by 2 goals to nil, there was a double satisfaction about the victory of the Blues on Saturday. At one time it looked as though the game would end in a draw, but with goals added by Fred Hawkes and Hedley, the result was as given above.

There were not five thousand spectators when the game started, and with the weather fine, although cold, the conditions were very favourable. There was some comment upon the fact that Potts was included at left back for no other apparent reason than to give him a trial. It was not surprising, perhaps; that he suffered from "nerves." Throughout the greater part of the game he showed a great desire to "hang back," and it was only towards the end that he really played with anything like confidence. He was undoubtedly weak, and it would certainly be risking too much to include him in the team against Brentford for next Saturday's Cup-tie.

The game was fast, especially in the first half. Exeter are by no means a poor team, and they came with a good reputation, having beaten Portsmouth in the week by 5 goals to nil. They never left off trying, and might have met with a better fate. But there could be no doubt about the superiority of the home team, and those two goals which came late in the second half were well deserved on the run of the play.

Smith kicked off against the wind, and Harrison scored an offside goal in the first minute. Two very good centres by Brown then threatened danger, but both were cleared. Luton came again, and receiving from a free kick taken by Hedley, Smith dashed between the backs and scored. The ball hit one post and rebounded to the other before it went in, completely beating Crossthwaite.

This happened in less than three minutes after the start, and it encouraged Luton to put in some hot attacks. Brown put across several splendid centres, one of which was headed by Moody, but the goalkeeper caught the ball. Following a centre by Stansfield, Quinn shot hard in the right direction, but an opponent happened to be in the way. Moody almost scored from the resultant corner.

Midfield play followed, and Exeter had two or three pot shots at goal. When Luton came again, Crelley brought Smith down in the penalty area, but the referee took no notice of the offence.

About this time it was noticed that Abe Jones, who was playing a great game, had hurt his ankle. He kept on playing, and after a while was comparatively none the worse for the mishap.

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For a time play ruled slightly in favour of Exeter, but they were never allowed to get really dangerous, Hedley being in good form, and to a great extent making up for the deficiencies of his partner. A clever pass from Smith gave Stansfield a chance, which he promptly took, and Moody charged Crossthwaite as he was saving. The custodian did not appreciate the experience and limped slightly.

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Brown tricked two men and centred, but Abe Jones headed wide. Then Harrison broke away and looked like scoring. With both backs beaten, Jarvis came out, but he only kicked the ball a few yards. He was some distance from goal when Bell received. The Exeter man, realising that he had a good chance, shot hard—and much too high. He repeated the performance a few minutes later when Exeter got down, after Quinn had been prominent in a couple of attacks by Luton.

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A centre from Green, the Exeter outside-right, went across the mouth of goal, and was returned, but Bob Hawkes eventually cleared. At the other end Crossthwaite always seemed to be in the right place, but he was almost beaten by one of Moody's headers. A corner resulted, and Jones headed, only to find Crossthwaite's hands blocking the way.

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A pretty movement on the part of the Luton front rank ended in Brown obtaining possession, and he was given offside, much to the dissatisfaction of the spectators. Brown appeared to me to be offside, but Mr. Pitchford was a long time making up his mind. A sustained attack on the Exeter goal came next. Crossthwaite saved from Moody, and a shot by Quinn went across the goal. The ball was returned, and Quinn had another try, Crelley this time heading behind.

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Then just as the interval was drawing near, Exeter equalised. Both backs had been drawn over to the left, and when the ball came across to Green he was practically unmarked. Bob Hawkes was not many yards distant, but he was too far away to tackle the man. Green made progress and then tried a rising shot. Jarvis evidently thought it would go out of play on the other side of goal, but the ball rebounded off the post and into the net.

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For some time after the interval Luton attacked in great style. A shot by Brown rolled along the crossbar. Crossthwaite only just saved an attempt by Stansfield, and the ball went to Quinn, whose shot was too high. Smith tried to dash through, but the ball was bouncing, and he could not control it sufficiently to shoot hard. A good shot by Quinn went off one of the defenders, and from the corner Stansfield gave Crossthwaite a warm task.

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Then Exeter got down, and Harrison had a good chance but kicked round the ball. A long shot by Moody travelled in the right direction, but once more the goalkeeper was on the alert. At the other end Watson made a weak effort, and Jarvis had no difficulty in clearing. A long shot by Jones went over. A foul on Moody near the corner resulted in a free kick and a determined attack.

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The referee ought to have given a penalty for a foul on Moody immediately afterwards. He let the incident pass, but a little later the linesman held up his flag. Stansfield took another free kick near the corner, and after the ball had been kicked by two or three other players, F. Hawkes drove it into the top of the net. It was pleasing to note that nearly all the Luton players shook hands with the scorer.

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This happened a quarter of an hour from the finish, and about half-way from the end it was followed by another point. There was a disagreement between the two Jones quite forty yards from the Exeter goal, and the referee gave a free kick. Hedley took it and sent the ball straight to Crossthwaite's charge. Two Luton men dashed up, and in trying to avoid them, the goalkeeper missed the ball.

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Taking the play all through, Luton thoroughly deserved their victory. After the work they had put in in the first half, it was decidedly rough luck to cross over on level terms, and there was reason to fear that they might not be equal to another "forty-five" at the same pace. Fortunately, however, they kept it up to the end, and their condition must be regarded as a high compliment to their trainer—and themselves.

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The halves were again in brilliant form, Bob Hawkes once more showing wonderful cleverness, speed, and endurance. In my opinion, Bob has never played better than on these two occasions. Then Jones was simply indefatigable. He was all that a centre-half should be—conspicuous in forcing the attack as in rallying the defence. Fred Hawkes, too, was always in the picture, and everyone was delighted that it fell to his lot to score the winning goal.

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Against such resolute halves, the Exeter forwards found it very difficult to get going, and when they did find an opening, Hedley proved a rare stumbling-block. Hedley takes a good many risks, and for that reason I cannot understand the leaving out of McCurdy, whose experience and judgment make him just the right sort of partner.

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The forwards made an exceedingly well-balanced line, and the amount of pressure they exerted should have resulted in more goals. Brown's speedy sprints and accurate centres were again a feature of the play, and Quinn likewise was always to the fore. Smith played a very taking game in the centre, keeping his wings well going and being ever on the alert to snap up anything that came his way. Stansfield and Moody also were quite a success, the latter being much more like himself than in some recent matches.

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Under the conditions narrated, it is not a matter for wonder that Jarvis had the least to do of any man in the eleven. He was not often seriously troubled, but when called upon was ever ready to give a good account of himself.

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The way in which Harrison burst through in the first minute, following upon his remarkable performance against Portsmouth, led one to expect fireworks in that direction, but for the most part he was effectually bottled up by the home halves, and, like the other forwards, had little chance of distinguishing himself. The visiting half-backs were a trio of workers, and the backs were similarly industrious, but it was a pity that the defensive tactics were not always as scrupulous as they might have been. Crossthwaite rendered his side excellent service in goal.

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