

FOOTBALL NOTES and NEWS

SOUTHERN LEAGUE.

LUTON v. EXETER.

GREAT GAME ENDS IN A WIN FOR THE BLUES.

THE CASE OF McCURDY.

Though it may not have been of such high-class in the matter of scientific football as the match of the previous week with Queen's Park Rangers, Saturday's encounter with Exeter must be put down as one of the great games of the season. There were many stirring moments, and the inevitable dullness occurring in a hard fought struggle was never allowed to become continuous. No doubt this fine performance was partly due to the ideal conditions prevailing, and one was disappointed not to see a larger crowd. It would seem that just now many of the Town's half-hearted supporters are missing the "plums" of the season.

There were a few necessary alterations in both teams. Chadwick, Exeter's dangerous centre-half, was injured the previous week, and he was deputised by Tierney; Crelly also took Craig's place at right back.

Luton made one alteration in their side. Potts, who has played this season with the Reserves, was brought in at left back, in place of McCurdy. By the way, there is some trouble between McCurdy and the directors. The latter were anxious to give Potts a trial, and decided that McCurdy should go with the Reserves to Chelsea. However, "Mac" declined to be shunted in such an unceremonious fashion, and he stayed at home on Saturday. What will be the result one can hardly tell. Certain it is that McCurdy will have many sympathisers. The directors have a perfect right to decide as to how the team shall be constituted, but McCurdy's case was rather out of the ordinary.

Towards the close of last season the left back received an intimation that he would not be signed on for the following (this) season, and he prepared to practically retire from the game. After the season had advanced a couple of months, and the directors found what a difficulty they had got into, McCurdy was approached and asked to sign on. He consented to do so, naturally on the understanding that if he was not required to play in the First Team, he would not be expected to turn out with the Reserves.

Before the directors signed McCurdy on last month, they were perfectly aware of all his capabilities in the field—that he would be slow, though sure; that he would never be brilliant, but yet capable of doing good service when an odd man's job was available. So how can they grumble when "Mac" fails to do more than he is capable of accomplishing? One may talk about the form McCurdy showed at Northampton. If all the other players were judged on that afternoon's performance, how many ought to have been relegated to the Second team? The pity is that when they were in such straits for a back, the directors did not go in for a really promising player who might be relied upon to do Luton a good turn at back, their weakest point in the field. But that is another matter.

However, this is meandering from Saturday's match with Exeter. If one were asked to sum up the game in a few words, it might be said that it was an exhibition of strength between Luton's forwards and Exeter's defence. The visiting front string were scarcely effective, and they were hardly ever dangerous. Had they been so, they must have told against the home defence line, which was very shaky, to say the least of it.

Though Exeter took up the running at the start, it was Luton who drew first blood. After Moody and Stansfield had made several unsuccessful individual attempts to penetrate Crossthwaite's charge, Smith was set going, and finished by placing safely in the corner of the net before the game was more than 10 minutes old. Naturally this early success put life into Luton, but on the other hand, it did not in the least dishearten the visitors. For the next half-hour play continued in a ding dong fashion without any tangible point accruing. Several good attempts by Exeter were spoiled by the forwards getting offside.

During most of the time the home forwards were playing a grand game. After Smith had registered the first point he was given more attention by Tierney. Quinn, however, was playing a great game in the forward ranks, and gave his partner Brown numerous opportunities. Stansfield, too, was brilliant on the left wing, and Moody had hard luck several times in not beating Crossthwaite. But the Exeter custodian really outshone himself; many of his saves were almost miraculous, as for instance the "header" from Moody, which the goalkeeper pushed over the bar, and the lightning shot from Quinn.

Exeter somewhat improved after this, and Jarvis was tested a few times, but the work of the visiting forwards was in striking contrast to that of Luton's front line. Exeter were palpably weak in front of goal, and practically every shot lacked "vim," so that Jarvis had scarcely ever anything really dangerous to stop. Again the unexpected happened. Green, on the right wing, was Exeter's most formidable forward. His sprints and centres were always dangerous. From one of these, just on half time, he found the net with a rattling good shot, which struck the upright, and bounded in, very much after the style in which Smith secured his goal.

The second half was as keenly fought as the first. After a time the Blues were all over their opponents. Brown struck the crossbar with a terrific drive, while Smith, Moody, and Stansfield were doing a deal of sharp-shooting. However, Crossthwaite's display between the uprights was brilliant indeed. Ten minutes to time, Stansfield centred almost from the corner, and Fred Hawkes receiving, made no mistake, but gave Luton the lead with a fine shot. Having stoutly defended for some time, the visitors now took up the aggressive, but they were not allowed to become dangerous. Towards the closing stages the Luton forwards swarmed round their opponents' goal. During one of these attacks, the leather was sent in from close quarters, and was rushed into the net. Thus Luton won by 3 goals to one.

Considering the play in the first half, Luton deserved an even bigger lead. Under ordinary circumstances, the Blues would have been at least three goals up at the interval, as they certainly merited it. Potts was fair, and it was noticed that he played with more confidence in the second moiety. But he is certainly not good enough for left back, in view of Saturday's Cup-tie. Still, there is a difficulty not easily to be overcome.