

Southern League.

PORTSMOUTH v. LUTON.

Played at Fratton Park on Saturday.

Result:—

Portsmouth	3 goals.
Luton	2 goals.

The teams turned out as under:—

Portsmouth—Cope; Thomson and A. E. Knight; Beaumont, Shuffelebotham, and Yates; Long, Kirby, Bowman, McMahon, and Dix.

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

Referee, Mr. J. Schumacher (London).

It was rather extraordinary that both clubs were able to play what is considered their absolutely strongest teams, for usually at this period of the season the strain of four months' arduous football has told its tale and injuries cause compulsory changes. Portsmouth certainly made one change from the team which played such a surprising game at Park Royal the previous week, but this made for extra strength, A. E. Knight now being looked upon as a regular member of the team, and was only away the Saturday previous because he was playing for England at Stamford Bridge.

R. Hawkes was also able to make the journey after a week's absence from the team for the same reason as the Portsmouth amateur, and with Smith wishing to play, Luton had their best available side for the first time for five weeks. It is a curious fact that previous to Saturday Luton had never scored a goal at Portsmouth, the nearest they had been to this being the award of a penalty kick last season in the last five minutes, which Jones failed to convert. Therefore, although no League points rewarded the team, the fact that a couple of good goals were netted this journey is some consolation, although, as will be shown below, something more tangible should have come along.

Bob won the toss, and Bowman kicked off under pleasant conditions, much more so, it appears, than at most places on Saturday, for the turf at Fratton Park was in grand condition, and a good crowd of at least 8,000 viewed the contest in comfort, more in keeping with late September than mid December. It is always a handicap to a visiting side to play before a crowd of supporters who have only leanings towards the home team, and for such a long journey as Portsmouth it is quite out of the question for many Lutonians to be present. Still, as is usually the case, we have the pleasure of seeing ex-Lutonians on almost every ground, who certainly follow the team's doings very enthusiastically. Whenever Luton visit either Southampton or Portsmouth, it is pretty certain to find one such from the Isle of Wight in the person of Mr. Drewett, a son of the late Alderman Drewett, who will be remembered by many Lutonians. Another very interested onlooker on Saturday was Ted Turner, who is at the present time residing at Portsmouth, and he seemed very pleased to renew his acquaintance with those members of the team who were his colleagues some four or five years ago.

But to get to the game itself. Naturally, after all the glowing accounts of the fine forward work of the actual quintette playing on Saturday for Pompey, the spectators expected them to take hold of the game right away. Therefore it was with some surprise they saw the Luton five doing the major part in this particular. Certainly in no away game have the Luton forwards opened so cleverly, and they kept it up right through the match. Indeed, it was a really interesting encounter from first to last between two clever sides, for although Luton never managed to get the lead, they always appeared likely to get on equal terms, and the game was not won until the

final whistle, and even then only through a bad mistake by the referee.

Stansfield and Moody were constantly working for openings, and Thomson had a very worrying afternoon, but so well did the home side defend that it was difficult to get through at the critical moment. Although the pressure put on was always promising goals, it was not until near the interval that one actually came along, and then it went to the wrong side. Still it must not be thought all the play was at one end of the field, for the home forwards were a smart line, and but for the five half-back work of Luton would have been extremely dangerous. Yet Luton had more than an equal share of the game up to the interval. It looked a good thing when a miskick by Thomson let Smith in, and the Luton centre went direct for goal, but Knight just managed to get at him and block his progress in great style. Again a dash through by Brown left Knight standing, and his centre went right across the mouth of goal. Smith left the ball to Moody, but Bert headed wide, and a decent opportunity was lost. A bit later Cope saved two good attempts by Brown, who worked into the centre of the field before letting drive.

At the opposite end the first real danger came from Long, who managed for once to get clear, and it was almost as much as Jarvis could manage to punch away his drive, but this was just managed, only to have the ball returned from midfield before Jarvis could recover his position. Fortunately, it was sent wide. But the Luton goal enjoyed an even luckier escape when Kirby sent in a beauty, Jarvis only just being able to stop the ball, and as he fell at the same time, it simply needed a touch, and Dix being right on the spot it seemed certain the goal would be scored, but Hedley managed to recover, and just bustle the ball away from Dix right in the goal-mouth.

The game was over half-an-hour old before the first corner kick was given, Stansfield forcing this, and taking it himself, he placed the ball about three yards by the extreme post. Brown and Quinn each had a chance to screw the ball from a rather difficult angle, but in their eagerness they got in the way of each other, and the chance was spoilt. However, about five minutes off half-time the first goal came as a direct result of a free kick against Bob Hawkes for handling. The incident happened well inside the Luton half, and no actual danger appeared imminent, or a more vigorous protest against the decision would doubtless have been made, for it is certain the Luton captain did not handle the ball; indeed, it struck him on the chest as it rose quickly from the pitch.

Any way, the free kick was taken, and the ball went right away to Long near the touch-line, and he was soon slipping down the field with it. Taking the ball almost to the corner flag, he wound up with a sharp centre, and Bowman coming up the middle, met this first time and crashed it through, although it struck both Jarvis and the crossbar before finding a final lodging in the net. There was a real element of luck about this, for Bowman had no time to consider his aim, and he kicked at it blindfold, as it were, trusting to the good fortune which helped it through. It was rather a damper to the Luton players to find themselves a goal down at half-time, for if either side deserved a goal it was the visitors.

As in the first half, Luton pressed on the restart, but could not improve their midfield advantage, and the first actual chance fell to Kirby from a left-wing pass. However, he made a terrible mess of matters, and put the ball yards over from an easy position. The crowd openly jeered this miss, but it was all forgotten immediately after when he put in a low drive just inside the upright, beating Jarvis by its pace. Dick threw himself at the ball and indeed completely blocked the way, but he was not half a second too late, and the

ball was behind him as he lay stretched out across the goal.

Even now Luton set to work to redeem matters, and after five minutes they were rewarded by a goal, Moody heading through a grand centre from Brown. The same player just afterwards had a well-judged shot saved by Cope, and Luton went full out for the equaliser. Cope also brought off a grand save from Smith at the expense of a corner, from which there was a hot melee in front of goal, but nothing resulted. Directly after this Dix was going through and was brought down rather heavily by Hedley, who was cautioned by the referee. The free kick went for a corner, which was easily cleared.

Smith went through amid claims for offside, but the referee paid no heed to these, and Luton's three inside forwards were found right in front almost in a bunch, with only Cope to beat. It looked a certain goal, and it was simply a question of who should take the actual kick. Eventually Quinn was found to have tried his prowess, but he just touched the ball direct to Cope, and one of the easiest chances imaginable was thrown away. Probably the fact that all three Lutonians were on the spot prevented the score, for it is pretty certain Quinn would have improved the opportunity if he had been by himself. Seven minutes from time the Luton goal had a marvellous escape, the ball striking the upright with Jarvis beaten, but he brought off a grand save at the expense of a corner from the return by Dix. Unfortunately, however, another goal resulted from this incident. Dix placed the ball splendidly, and it came sailing along the front of goal almost level with the crossbar. Before Jarvis could get his fist to it, he was bundled into by Bowman, and it curled just under without touching anyone. The referee at once gave the goal, which was obviously a wrong decision, for Jarvis was charged, and he decidedly never touched the ball. Bob made a most spirited protest to the referee, and was talking to him all the way down the field. There was some little trouble with the kick-off, for the Luton players seemed disinclined to re-start, but eventually this was smoothed over and the game proceeded to its natural conclusion.

After this Luton attacked desperately, and Cope and Thomson stopped certain goals from close range, and finally another centre from Brown was put through by Moody a minute or so before the final whistle. Both the Luton goals were well got, and no luck in either case helped them; indeed, the spectators were inclined to sympathise with the players on the actual result, although of course pleased with the win.

There was no pronounced weakness in either team, and the game was pleasantly contested, although there were many free kicks, chiefly for offside. Jarvis had no chance with the goals with the possible exception of the second, and he brought off several fine saves. The defensive division were all seen to advantage, although Hedley came in for some attention from the crowd because of his manner of playing his opponents offside so frequently. The front rank compared very favourably with the much-praised Pompey five. Probably Stansfield and Moody were the cleverer pair as a wing, and they have apparently come back to their old form and combination. Smith, without being brilliant, did well in the centre for his first game since the Cup-tie, and Brown's dashes always spelt danger, both goals being a result of his work. Quinn did well in midfield, but did not pass to his partner so well as in some matches; still he was always well looked after, and as a line it is pretty certain Luton have not possessed a finer combination for many years.

The first team have a heavy programme for Christmas, being down to play four matches in five days. On Friday they are at Coventry, and on Christmas Day will receive a visit from

Bristol Rovers The return match will be played at Bristol on Monday, and on Tuesday Luton will be at home to Brentford. The matches at Luton commence at 2.30. The Reserves will not be on view in Luton this Christmas, being due to appear at Hastings on Christmas Day and Tottenham on Tuesday.

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It will be remembered that in the West Ham match a little brown dog interfered with play, and was lifted over the fence by Hedley. The same dog went on to the field at the Reserve match on Saturday, and ran after the ball, interfering with play so much that a linesman carried the animal off the pitch.