

Southern League.

Luton Score Their First Goal at Portsmouth.

A Goal From Corner Kick Without Touching a Second Player.

PLAYERS COMPLAIN OF REFEREE'S DECISIONS.

It was Luton's tenth visit to Fratton Park on Saturday and the players were very determined to break one record at least, for this was the one ground in the Southern League where Luton had been denied the consolation of a single goal. For the first time for some weeks full strength was played, Smith and R. Hawkes coming back to the team. In the case of the centre forward it was only decided at the last minute to include him, but he was most anxious to play, and naturally he is as good a judge as anyone as to fitness. Anyway he stood the strain and felt no ill effects.

Pompey were also fully represented, A. E. Knight being the only change from the side which brought off such a sensational win at Park Royal the previous Saturday. This alteration was made with a view to strengthen the team, the left full-back having played behind the Luton captain at Stamford Bridge in the Amateur international. The heavy rains recently have rendered many pitches almost unplayable, but Fratton Park on Saturday was an exception, and the turf was in good condition. Luton won the toss and took advantage of a slight breeze. The teams turned out as under:—

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

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

Referee: Mr. J. Schumacher, London.

At the outset Luton were the attacking party and the left wing was very much in evidence, so much so that Stansfield early had to put up with the unwelcome attentions of the Pompey defenders and the game was stopped for a free kick in Luton's favour. The ball was well placed, and Smith made a desperate attempt to get through, but offside against Quinn relieved the danger. A minute later Knight had to rush across to prevent a clean run into goal by Smith, who had shaken off the attentions of Thomson, but the home back just managed to get to the ball and clear what appeared a very dangerous opening. It was seldom the ball was away from the vicinity of the home goal at this stage, and the spectators were pretty loud in calling upon the locals to change the venue, cries of "Get it away, Portsmouth," being heard all round the field.

Luton's left wing was a constant source of trouble, and Moody tried a shot at goal, but he got little powder behind it and Cope easily cleared. When the home side did get away it was Dix who secured the ball, but F. Hawkes twice nipped in and got the ball away from the ex-Kettering winger. Still, the home attack now had more of the game. Kirby sent the ball right across the field, but Dix was given offside, Hedley having come down the field to meet the midfield danger. A smart clearance by McCurdy was the next feature of the game. But the Luton forwards were soon on "the warpath" again, a miskick by Thomson letting Moody away, and he shot in from long range, the ball just clearing the crossbar. Luton kept up the attack and pressure was put on the home defence from all quarters, only to find that department in fine form, and no impression could be made on the score sheet.

Jones tried his hand with a long drive but placed very wide, and there were jeers from the crowd. Brown was much nearer the target on two occasions, Cope having to handle smartly each time. Long broke away on the right and centred the ball finely. Jarvis, coming out to the ball, knocked it away down the field over the heads of several players. At the same time he hit Jones, and the game was stopped for a minute, to enable Abe to recover. At the opposite end Moody put in a smart attempt, but Cope was equal to the occasion, while a couple of free kicks, awarded for technical offences just outside the Portsmouth penalty area, were cleared by Thomson. There was an exciting incident hereabouts. Kirby worked himself into a good position and, taking his time, let drive at goal. The shot looked a certain scorer, but Jarvis just managed to reach it, although he fell in saving and could not get the ball out of danger. It rolled slowly to Dix about three yards out of goal, and he had simply to touch it through, but he dallied and Hedley managed to scramble it away. This was the nearest thing to an actual goal up to date, and Luton were rather lucky in not being a goal down.

Following this, the game resumed its previous course, and although both sets of forwards played clever football in midfield the defenders always came out on top at the critical moment. Free kicks were very frequent, and the game was somewhat spoilt by the excessive whistling for very minor offences. The game was by no means dirty, and some of the stoppages were really irritating. The first corner kick of the match was in Luton's favour and it almost resulted in a goal. Brown and Quinn had the ball about four yards wide of the upright, but they were in each other's way, and eventually the ball went over for a goal kick. Half-time was now fast approaching, and it appeared nothing tangible would come of the first half when a misfortune befell Luton, which led directly up to the opening goal.

In meeting the ball Bob Hawkes was wrongly judged by the ruling official to have intentionally handled. As a matter of fact, the ball struck Bob on the chest as it rose sharply from the pitch, and he protested against the decision. However, as the incident occurred inside the Luton area, little danger was anticipated, and the free kick was promptly taken. The ball went out on the right wing to Long and he dashed off in great style, finally sending across a good centre, which Bowman took on the run and crashed against the under-side of the crossbar, from which it glanced into the net. Luton made desperate efforts to neutralise this unlucky goal before the interval without effect, and the score at that stage was:—

Portsmouth 1, Luton 0.

Although a goal down, Luton played up strongly on the restart and an equaliser almost came about as the result of a free kick, the ball being splendidly cleared by Cope from a regular ruck of players. In his rush out he ran into Yates, and the game was stopped for a minute or so to enable the home captain to recover. At the opposite end of the field the Luton goal had a narrow escape. Indeed, it appeared Kirby must score, but he put the ball over in a truly marvellous manner. It was the worst miss of the match for Pompey, and naturally the spectators let the player know it. But it was quite forgotten two minutes later, when he literally drove the ball through when it looked impossible to score. Jarvis threw himself across the goal, but was just half a second too late. It almost seemed as if the ball actually passed under his body as he lay across the goal-mouth, because the majority quite expected to find the ball outside the net with Jarvis touching the upright as he did, and seeming to quite block the opening. However, it was found resting inside and Luton were two goals down after having had, at least, an equal share of the game.

Still, they never gave up, and within three minutes the lead was reduced. Brown shook off all opposition, and with one of his characteristic centres planted the ball right across the goal to Moody, who promptly headed it well out of Cope's reach, and incidentally broke Luton's spell of ten years' non-success at potting the goal at Portsmouth. It was finely got, and was cheered by many in the crowd. More life was at once put into the game and the crowd did not altogether like the tactics of the Luton defence. Hedley, in particular, "got on their nerves," and everything he did was roundly hooted. The only time there was any cause for this was one foul on Dix, a few yards outside the penalty area, and for this offence he was cautioned by the referee. Both sides had chances and once Quinn should have netted easily from what the spectators considered an offside position, and there was much merriment when he put in a tame shot

direct at Cope from five yards range. This miss was on a par with that of Kirby, previously mentioned, and both would take some explaining. Neither side could claim any sustained advantage, and the game was being fought out to the bitter end in fine style.

Seven minutes from time the Luton goal had another lucky escape. With the ball first hitting the upright and rebounding to Dix, the home left winger gave Jarvis a hot one to negotiate, but the Luton goalkeeper just turned it for a corner kick. It was a magnificent save, and it was real rank bad luck that this should lead up to the most unsatisfactory incident of the afternoon. Dix planted the ball finely from the resulting corner kick, almost on a level with the crossbar, indeed, it appeared to be travelling out of play. Jarvis was, however, waiting to punch it away when he was charged into by Bowman and never had a chance to get his fist to the ball. However, it just curled under, and the referee allowed the goal to stand. Luton players appealed strongly against this decision, and R. Hawkes was seen arguing with Mr. Schumacher, but it was of no use and it looked likely Luton would suffer a two-goal defeat through a bad mistake of the presiding official. Undoubtedly it should have been a free kick for Luton, for Jarvis would certainly have cleared the ball if he had not been charged. The decision was particularly disappointing, because, but for it, Luton would have secured one of the points, as before the finish another fine centre from Brown was turned to advantage, Moody again doing the trick with a clever shot. There was just a chance even now that a draw would be the result, for Luton were having the greater share of the game at the finish, but this was denied them, and the final whistle went with the score:—

Portsmouth 3, Luton 2. 1

COMMENTS ON THE PLAY AND PLAYERS.

Although once again on the losing side at Fratton Park, Luton gave one of their best away exhibitions. It was generally admitted that no Luton team had been seen to so much advantage on that ground. Certainly, the forwards played clever football, and although it was not to be expected Smith would be right in his best form his inclusion helped considerably in this direction. Recently the best work has come from the right wing, but at Portsmouth Stansfield and Moody were playing the better mid-field football, and they were a constant worry to Thomson, who has played much more effective games against Luton in previous seasons. Still, the actual goals came from Brown, whose centres, when he did get clear, were a great feature of the game. In singling out the left wing it must not be thought any reflection is being made on the other members of the attack, for, as a line, they were quite as good a quintette as that of Portsmouth.

Naturally the return of Bob Hawkes made for improvement, and the half back line was run to greater advantage than against West Ham, each doing their part in great style. At full back Hedley played well up the field and this put the home forwards offside far too many times to please the crowd, and they were inclined to resent some of the referee's decisions on this point, although I can only recall one occasion when that official was wrong under this head.

Indeed, in handling a rather difficult game, Mr Schumacher gave some wonderfully fine decisions on the offside point, and, but for his ruling on the third goal, little fault could be found with him, for it is very easy to make a mistake similar to that when he gave a free kick against Bob, for what he considered intentional handling. If there was any cause of complaint it was that we had a bit too much whistle, and what with the stoppages for technical fouls of little consequence and the numerous offside rulings it is many a long day since I remember so many free kicks in one game.

On Saturday's form Buick's position is not filled by Shufflebotham, although local opinion seems to be that the ex-captain will not get back easily, so I presume it was not one of Shufflebotham's best days. Dix is a great favourite at Portsmouth, and he is spoken about as a coming International, but on Saturday F. Hawkes was quite his equal, and it was seldom he could manage to slip the Luton defence. I do not remember seeing A. E. Knight before, but he was the better back, and promises to retain his position in the team, notwithstanding that such fine defenders as Clipstone and Warner are available. Bowman seems much faster than when down South before, and made a very dangerous pivot. But for the persistent attentions of Jones he would have made more impression on the score sheet. In summing up one's impressions of the game it should be said that a draw would have been the better result of the exchanges than the actual score. Seeing that Luton were never in front, this speaks well for the players' determination.