

The Southern League.

PLYMOUTH ARGYLE v. LUTON.

Played at Home Park, Plymouth, on Saturday.
Result:—

Plymouth Argyle.....	4 goals.
Luton	2 goals.

The teams turned out as under:—

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

Plymouth Argyle—Sutcliffe; Fagan and Atterbury; Wilcox, Evenson, and Baker; Griffiths, H. W. Raymond, Hindmarsh, Burch, and Lamb.

Referee, Mr. W. Davis (Gloucester).

Luton certainly broke record in one particular on Saturday, seeing that the players were only away from Luton a few minutes over the twenty-four hours, and nineteen hours twenty-four minutes of this was spent on the journey. Fortunately, the longest period in the train was spent after the match, so that its effects did not tell to the same extent as they would have done if the journey had been the other way round. As a matter of fact, the outward trip was a very pleasant one, and although the players only had just sufficient time to dress after arrival on the field, they appeared none the worse for that, and certainly more than held their own during the opening stages, and at the close they were having by far the better of the game.

It will be noticed that McCurdy did not make the journey, and his absence was the result of his nasty fall on the slippery ice the previous week. This meant Hedley had to take the left-back position; otherwise the team was constituted as usual. Plymouth also had a regular player away in Butler, and his place was taken by Fagan, a player who has had little opportunity to shine, although he came from Sheffield United at the commencement of the season with a good reputation. Two or three other positions were reshuffled, but greatly to the delight of their supporters, the Argyle had the assistance of H. W. Raymond, who had been off for a month.

The outlook was a dreary one, and the attendance was very disappointing to the Argyle directors, who had made a special appeal for support during the week. The official programme also was used for the same object, and one particular note was given large type in the following terms:—“Wanted, a millionaire to earn the everlasting gratitude of thousands of football enthusiasts by purchasing £1,000 worth of our shares.” Certainly the local exchequer would not be helped very much from Saturday's gate, for 3,000 would be a liberal estimate of the attendance.

Luton commenced as if they meant to take the lead, and but for the steadiness of the home defence undoubtedly would have done so. At this stage Stansfield was generally the player who brought the ball down, and Fagan was kept on the run in looking after the Luton winger. Sutcliffe, however, was equal to all the shots which came to hand. Then all at once a breakaway put quite a different complexion on the game, and it was Plymouth who had the satisfaction of taking the lead. Raymond and Griffiths made a clever run through, and the last-named player got the ball over to the opposite wing in fine style just before being tackled by Hedley. It appeared a nice opening for Burch if he could reach the ball, but he dallied with it, and the chance seemed gone altogether, when Lamb came to the rescue and just managed to turn the ball into the centre, Hindmarsh thereupon banging it by Jarvis from short range.

It was certainly undeserved on the play up to this point; nevertheless it had its influence on the result, for it meant an uphill struggle. Luton, however, did not give up heart at this early reverse, and quite held their own for some time, and then further disaster came along. During an attack someone was judged to have either tripped or handled inside the penalty area, and on the advice of a linesman a penalty kick was awarded to Plymouth. Personally, the writer has not the slightest knowledge of what the offence was, and enquiries after the match left the matter quite as big a mystery as ever. Curiously, the award was not made until the ball had gone out of play, and then it was noticed that the referee and linesman on the stand side were in conversation, and the upshot was the ball was placed on the penalty spot. There was a little trouble for a moment, for some of the Luton players were inclined to rock the decision, and one of them had to be ordered into position by the referee before the kick was taken. Atterbury advanced to take the penalty, and he completely beat Jarvis.

This second reverse certainly did have its effect on the Luton players, and up to half-time they were not seen to quite the same advantage as previously. Still the game was never one-sided, and, considering the conditions, very fast and interesting to watch. Both goalkeepers were responsible for several exceptionally fine saves. Smith put in at least two attempts that would have resulted in actual goals five times out of six in the ordinary way and against an ordinary goalkeeper, while Jarvis made one astonishing save from a regular pile-driver by Raymond when it looked a certain score. Chances to score were of frequent occurrence, but the defence held out well. Moody took a flying centre from Brown in fine style, and missed by inches only with a good header, while Jones tried to score on his own from fifteen yards' range, but unfortunately placed the ball wide for a goal kick. A little before half-time the ball was placed past Sutcliffe for the first time during the match, but Smith was given offside and nothing counted. At the opposite end Argy'e were more fortunate, for although Lamb must have been quite as much offside as Smith in the case just referred to, he was allowed to centre the ball to Hindmarsh, also well offside, and the home centre easily turned the ball through. The referee allowed the point to count, making Luton three goals down at the interval. In the dressing-room the players expressed themselves the victims of cruel luck, and this time at least they had good cause for complaint.

Commencing the second half with a determined attempt to at least put a better complexion on the game, Luton were able to notch an early goal. The ball came over from Brown, and Smith shot in, but almost overdid the attempt in his endeavour to miss Sutcliffe, for the ball struck the upright, but it rebounded across the goal-mouth, and Sutcliffe not being quick enough to get out of the way, it went clean through off the veteran's body. Luton now went into the fray with better spirit, and several determined dashes were made on Sutcliffe's charge, during one of which Smith was hurt and the game stopped, but he did not leave the field. Some good play by Quinn and Brown led up to Atterbury being forced to concede a corner to relieve the pressure. This was very poorly placed, and the ball did not nearly reach the goal, but a miskick by Atterbury let his side in for a second corner, which was only got away with considerable difficulty, the ball hovering round Sutcliffe for some time. At the other goal Jarvis was altogether beaten by a swift ground shot from Griffiths, but the ball travelled just wide of the extreme post as the spectators were preparing to shout "Goal." A most determined attack was set up from a well-placed pass by Smith well out to Brown, and the latter with the aid of his partner got the upper hand of Atterbury, although the Argy'e back refused to be shaken off altogether. Finally, the ball came over to Bob Hawkes, and he tried one of his well-known drives, but he was a shade out in his aim and the ball went over.

Luton were now pressing for all they were worth, and Sutcliffe punched away three shots which were sent in from short range, and almost before he could recover Moody got in a fourth which appeared to be travelling well into the corner of the net, but when everything seemed lost, Sutcliffe, in almost a miraculous manner, got to the ball and blocked its passage. It was just possible that Luton would even yet save the game, but a really clever goal by Raymond once more

damped their hopes. The local amateur was several yards outside the penalty area when he got the ball from the wing, and his way to goal appeared well blocked by the Luton defence, but he held on to the ball like grim death although tackled by Chapman and Hedley, and finally got in his shot, placing his side a fourth goal up.

However, even yet Luton were not done with, and Moody getting the ball from Smith when well placed, put in a well-judged shot right away from even Sutcliffe's reach. Luton continued to force the play almost up to the finish, but a sudden return down the field gave Raymond a chance to run away, as he was standing about six yards over the centre line and with literally no one but Jarvis to beat. Naturally, being allowed to go on, he had no difficulty in placing the ball in the net. It seemed a thing impossible that any official could allow this goal, but the referee did, and he pointed to the centre. The Luton players tried to argue with him, but he would have none of it until the teams were lining up, when the linesman called his attention to the fact that Raymond was offside. Then the referee was persuaded to alter his previous decision, the free kick, of course, being taken almost from the centre of the field, where Raymond first received the ball. Time came very soon after this, and Luton were once more unluckily beaten at Home Park, where they have played several fine games with very poor actual results.

Luton appear to be fated to suffer defeat by such simple-looking goals, and Saturday was no exception, for but for Raymond's point, none of the four was really the result of clever midfield work. Jarvis had no chance with any of them. Both backs did well up to a certain point, but somehow it seemed comparatively easy to get through every now and then, and this was the weak spot undoubtedly, as it has been so many times this season. The half-backs each got through a lot of effective work, and Bob was often prominent in attack as well as defence, while even the Plymouth spectators had nothing but praise for the Luton vanguard. Brown and Stansfield were continually making brilliant runs, and the three inside forwards were ever ready to provide openings, but it seemed all of little avail when it came to beating Sutcliffe, who is yet one of the finest custodians in the country on his day, and Saturday was one of them.

Naturally, the home officials were pleased with the result, for they badly need some encouragement in their hard struggle to keep the Southern League flag flying in the West. On Saturday's form Fagan did not weaken the home defence in any particular, and was probably the best back on the field. Without being at all brilliant, the Argyle halves played well, but their forwards were unequal, Raymond being by far the cleverest, while Griffiths and Lamb were a couple of dangerous wingers.