

Southern League.

EXETER CITY v. LUTON.

Played at Exeter on Saturday. Result:—

Exeter City..... 4 goals.

Luton 2 goals.

The teams were as follow:—

Luton -- Naisby; Wightman and Potts; F. Hawkes, Bushell, and Lashbrooke; Brown, Walker, Johnson, Moody, and Stansfield.

Exeter City—Whittaker; Evans and Coates; Duffy, Pratt, and Prideaux; Parnell, Watson, James, Bell, and Garside.

Referee, Mr A. E. Vickers (Reading).

Only one change was made in the Luton team from the previous week, Lashbrooke taking the place of R. M. Hawkes, who has never yet played at Exeter, greatly to the disappointment of the Western officials, who were hoping to be able to advertise his appearance. Johnson therefore remained at centre-forward, pending the arrival of the expected new player for this position. Lashbrooke is not a stranger to the left-half position, being at home in either place on this side of the field, and several times last season he played at left-half in the South-Eastern League.

Exeter had out their strongest side for some weeks, as Watson returned to the team after a rather long absence. If he had not been fit, it was the intention to give a trial to a local amateur, his pro. substitute, Smith, not having given satisfaction in recent matches. The only other change was at right-half, where Duffy was preferred to Bassett. Although the "West Country" is looked upon as a much warmer district than Luton, the sudden return of winter was also in evidence, and the cold, piercing wind kept the attendance down to less than 4,000.

Fred Hawkes unfortunately lost the toss, and as this entailed Luton having to face the wind, it had not a little to do with the actual result. Exeter went off with a rush, and for several minutes the Luton defenders were hard pressed. The most promising opening at this early stage came to Parnell, from a pass by Watson, but the City winger fired a trifle too high, the ball going over the bar at a great pace.

When Luton did get away, it was Stansfield and Moody who threatened danger, and their quick combination got the better of Duffy and Evans, but Whittaker coming out, met the centre and saved in good style. The City were awarded a free kick, and this being well placed, a bit of a mix-up inside the penalty area occurred. The ball bouncing up quickly, struck someone's hand, and the referee at once awarded the City a penalty kick. The Luton players protested strongly against this, and contended the ball actually hit the hand of one of the City forwards, but their plea was of no avail, and Evans came up to take the kick. He sent in a high shot which Naisby got his hand to, but its pace carried it to the back of the net, and the City were placed a goal up within five or six minutes of the start.

Garside made a fine individual effort to increase the lead, but Naisby was equal to the occasion, and then at the opposite end Whittaker touched aside a surprise shot at the expense of a corner. He got the ball from the flag-kick, and, running forward, put in a huge punt, the wind carrying the ball for a goal kick at the opposite end of the field, Potts holding Garside off the ball as it rolled over the line. For a time the game ruled in favour of Exeter, and several attempts were made to increase the score, but the Luton defence were giving nothing away, and did not allow the home attack to settle down at close range.

They were seriously handicapped midway in the first half by an injury to Lashbrooke, who was compelled to leave the field and did not return until after the interval. Ten minutes before half-time Watson manœuvred for position, and Pratt rushed up for the ball as it was sent across, and from twenty yards' range he took a shot at goal, the ball travelling to the back of the net at hurricane speed. It was voted to be the finest shot seen on the ground this season, and the scorer was overwhelmed with congratulations by his comrades.

Garside had the crowd settled down than Brown

Scarcely had the crowd settled down than Brown dropped across one of his finest centres, and the ball coming back to Bushell, the centre-half netted an almost similar goal to the one scored by Pratt. If the score had remained 2-1 up to the interval, Luton would not have complained, for certainly the help of the wind was worth at least one goal, and they would have turned round with some confidence of being able to put matters right in the second half, but just on the stroke of half-time another misfortune came along in the shape of a peculiar goal in favour of Exeter. Parnell got across a centre from the right, and Naisby, in clearing, drove it hard in the face of Garside, who was a trifle wide of the goal, but the ball coming off the City player at an angle, struck the ground and "broke" through the goal just clear of Wightman, who would have been able to get it away but for the "side" put on by contact with the pitch.

The home players had now to contend with the wind, and it was soon apparent they were in for an anxious time. Lashbrooke came out with his colleagues, but naturally was feeling the effects of the accident. Once or twice he was pulled up for handling the ball, but these free kicks brought no goals, and this being his first big match at half back, he was naturally a bit troubled at times to get the ball away, and thus had some excuse. The Luton backs played the home forwards offside on several occasions when they got dangerous, and this did not altogether please the spectators. Time was getting on, and Luton had not been able to make up their leeway, but at last they were encouraged by a goal. Brown got the better of a contest for the ball, and placed it finely across to the left wing. Coates just managed to get his head to it, but only to see the ball drop at the feet of Moody, who slipped it through right away from Whittaker.

Just previous to this a snowstorm had come along, and as the City players were now facing this, there really seemed a chance for Luton to at least draw, but a sudden dash down the left wing on the part of Garside quite upset such calculations, for Bell met the ball as it came from Garside's centre, and whipped in a grounder just away in the right-hand corner of the net. The snow soon stopped after this, and the game was pretty evenly contested to the finish. The most promising opening came as a result of a free kick taken by Wightman, but this was saved at the expense of a corner, and the wind carried the flag kick behind.

The game was voted a real good one by the home spectators, and notwithstanding the heavy handicap of facing the elements with a man short for quite a long period, Luton set up a stubborn defence, and were quite unlucky to have four goals put up against them. Naisby touched three of the shots, but had really no chance with either. The vigorous tactics of Wightman and Potts were not to the liking of the crowd, but there is not the slightest doubt their partnership has greatly stiffened the Luton defence, and with ordinary luck knocking about, no four goals should have been put up against them. Lashbrooke had little chance to show what he can do as a half-back, and Bushell proved the best player in this line, quite apart from the goal he scored. Forward, the left wing were the better pair, Walker not doing quite so well as the previous week. While Johnson worked hard, he did not prove the missing link needed to keep up the high standard of Luton's front rank work.

For Exeter, Whittaker did not impress one as likely to be very nimble under difficulties, but his weight is very useful in a melee. Evans appeared the safer back of the two, Coates miskicking several times. Pratt was the star of the intermediate division. The return of Watson was judged the main cause of the improved City attack, which possessed plenty of snap and go. There was a tremendous amount of wild shooting, but it pays better in the long run to have a go rather than not shoot at all.