

LUTON v. CRYSTAL PALACE.

Played at Luton on Saturday. Result:—

Luton 1 goal.

Crystal Palace 1 goal.

The teams were as follow:—

Luton—Naisby; Wightman and Potts; F. Hawkes, Bushell, and Johnson; Brown, Walker, Stephenson, G. West, and Stansfield.

Crystal Palace—Johnson; Collyer and Bulcock; Collins, Hughes, and Hanger; Garratt, Hewitt, Williams, Woodhouse, and Davies.

Referee, Mr. R. P. Dommett (Portsmouth).

Beautiful weather favoured this match, which was witnessed by some 7,000 spectators. The Palace, although second on the table, only occupied that position by virtue of extra matches played. It was important to them, therefore, that they should secure both points, a feat they accomplished on the Luton ground last season in a game which realised a crop of half-a-dozen goals. Swindon, placed at the head of the League, had up to Saturday the Palace as their nearest attendants, with Brighton and West Ham lying close up. The results led to no shifting of these positions, although had the Brighton Club not allowed themselves to be beaten at home by Exeter, Crystal Palace's inability to dispose of Luton would have cost them second place.

Recent results between Luton and the Glaziers have been curiously erratic. Last season, here, the Palace won by 4 to 2, but in the return game the Blues got their own back with a 3-1 win. In December last the score was 3-1 again, this time in favour of the Palace, and a balance was struck on Saturday, with a draw of one all.

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It has been characteristic of Luton that through recent matches they have fallen very much into the ways of their opponents, and left it to them to decide what kind of a game we shall have. Thus it will be remembered that when Swindon, a fortnight ago opened out in quite classical style, Luton set to work in like fashion, and an interesting game was played. It is difficult to say who set the fashion on Saturday, or was it that the teams mutually dropped into the give-and-take rule? A draw fairly represented the merits.

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It is to be urged in extenuation of Luton's occasional inertness that they had come through a heavy game the previous day at Plymouth, whereas the Palace were disengaged. Two games within twenty-four hours on hard grounds and in summer-like weather, under League conditions, are no light task.

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Bob Hawkes was out of the side. His place was taken by Johnson, who a few weeks earlier had filled a vacancy in the forward line after Smith's departure, pending the arrival of Stephenson. The crisis arising out of the mishap to Moody was temporarily relieved by the inclusion of G. West. This player is a Northern amateur. He has been playing in the Tyneside League, a competition amongst clubs teeming with present talent and youth of promise. It is unfair to judge West upon his single appearance, but he was not a marked success, despite the fact that his main supporter is also from Tyneside.

The opening stages of the game led to false hopes. The Palace initiated a strong attack, which Wightman stopped, and there was a moment of excitement when the Lutonians went away down to the visitors' goal. Brown kicked over near the posts. Bushell dribbled down and shot wide a little later, and enthusiasm was aroused by a corner conceded to Luton. Stansfield placed the ball nicely, and the position was maintained for a moment, until Bushell headed in. Johnson (Palace) fouled, but the referee gave no ruling, and the custodian cleared. The exchanges continued brimful of excitement for the first few minutes, Walker once heading over and Brown shooting wide. Brown, Walker, Stephenson, and Bushell shared strong work. Stephenson was thought to have a good chance of which he did not make the most. Play slackened down to long kicking, and Naisby had work to do on three occasions. In aggressive work, Brown and Walker were a handful for the Palace. The combination of this pair was better than ever. Brown, it is true, was at fault in shooting, but where there is no mistake there is never anything above mediocrity. Walker was the hero of the occasion, however, and has improved much since he joined. The half continued evenly without a score, although just before the interval a corner kick nearly resulted in a goal for Luton, Johnson sending over the bar.

Bushell had retired before half-time, suffering from a strained leg, and when the teams reappeared he was still an absentee. The Lutonians were surprisingly forceful in the circumstances, and the home crowd waxed very enthusiastic during a sustained short-handed attack upon the visitors' citadel. Garratt took away with a splendid dribble, the individual run of the afternoon, and surviving repeated tackles, shot well in. Wightman was fortunately on the spot to head away. A quick and unexpected rally by Luton drew the attack upon the Palace goal, where the keeper was sore pressed. He beat the ball back several times, until Stephenson got an opening in the melee and shot into the net. The score was registered under unusually exciting conditions. Bushell returned soon afterwards. The Luton men were playing the smarter, and a win seemed fairly within prospect. Unfortunately, however, by an unaccountable momentary slackness, they let the Palace in twenty minutes from the end. The ball was dribbled up to goal in the softest fashion, and Hewitt shot in. Naisby stopped at full length on the ground, and he had not time to clear the ball, which lay just beyond his reach, ere Williams "chipped in" and put through. The home custodian was in no way responsible. At the moment, the Palace front rank had Naisby and the ball to themselves. Luton probably never lost a League point under more aggravating circumstances. There were free kicks on both sides, and once Hughes nearly scored with a powerfully headed ball, which hit the crossbar and glanced off. On the whole, however, the play lacked incident of that character to be expected of well-trained class players. The heat was an extra trial to the men. Luton lost Bushell again, he having gone off just after the Palace scored, so that it was well Wightman and Potts were both found in steady form. The Palace had a substantial share of the attack, and on one or two occasions their work was almost worth the goal. An unbiassed spectator must have been well satisfied that the teams finished level. The fact that the goal Palace got might with greater watchfulness have been averted is, of course, no part of the main argument.