

LUTON TOWN IN THE WARS.

Crystal Palace beat them at Home.

A Tale of Two Penalties.

Luton experienced a series of misfortunes in their encounter with Crystal Palace, on Saturday, and were undeservedly conquered by a goal to nil. Luck was dead against them, and whereas Bob Hawkes failed to convert a penalty, the visitors claimed their victory from a penalty kick awarded late in the game. Mishaps to home players told against the side, and inability to accept opportunities when near goal contributed not a little to their defeat, but for all that their display merited victory. It was the third home defeat, and the Blues are now perilously near the bottom of the table.

* * *

Owing to injuries, two changes were necessary in Luton's ranks, Ashton and Lashbrooke playing in place of Potts and Moody, who were suffering from damage sustained at Millwall the previous week, while Walker was anything but fit. Crystal Palace, on the other hand, were represented by their strongest eleven, which has accomplished some smart performances in recent engagements. Mr. A. Adams, of Nottingham, a well-known "knight of the whistle," had charge of the game, and the teams were called together as follow:—

Luton:—Naisby; Wightman, J. Ashton; F. Hawkes, Bushell, R. Hawkes; Brown, Walker, Stephenson, Lashbrooke, Stansfield.

Crystal Palace:—Johnson; Collyer, Bulcock; Spottiswoode, Hughes, Hanger; Garrett, Hewitt, Woodhouse, Williams, Davies.

* * *

Bob Hawkes won the toss, and Woodhouse kicked off for the Palace before 5,000 spectators. Luton immediately became aggressive, and from a centre by Brown, Bulcock headed over for a corner. The kick was beautifully placed, but Bulcock cleared, and Wightman had to stop a dangerous rush by the visiting forwards. Hewitt next got in a smart run, and finished with a judicious centre, which Wightman headed away, and Luton invaded in determined style. A foul against Hanger looked well for the homesters, but a smart movement by Stansfield and Lashbrooke was frustrated by Collyer, who headed away. From a foul against Davies, Johnson was forced to leave his citadel in order to clear, and he only just managed to throw the ball away. Brown became conspicuous for some smart manoeuvring, and finished by placing the ball well to the centre, but Stephenson failed to successfully trap the ball when getting through, and a favourable opportunity of scoring was lost.

* * *

The Palace next attacked, through Garrett, who beat Ashton and looked a certain scorer, but Naisby brought off a brilliant save at the expense of a corner. Luton again took up the running, and, following clever work by Bob Hawkes, Lashbrooke tried a long drive. The ball swerved towards the goal, but just missed the upright and went behind. The homesters' forwards were now guilty of indiscreet kicking, and in consequence several well-meant movements had a miserable termination. Profiting by this, the Palace set up a strong attack, and after considerable pressure Hewitt sent in a shot, which Wightman headed away from the goal mouth. Play had not been in progress many minutes ere the visiting custodian raised the ire of the crowd by committing a very unsportsmanlike action. He had been called upon to handle, and Stephenson was making for him, when he put his foot up in a dangerous manner and deliberately attempted to foul the homesters' pivot. The incident, however, was not noticed by the referee, but the crowd did not forget to show disapproval of Johnson's conduct—conduct which was really extraordinary on the part of one who is regarded in football circles as a second Bob Hawkes. It was doubtless an act of impulse, for which the player was at once sorry, but it should certainly have been punished by a penalty award.

* * *

Play continued to be remarkably even, and each goal was in turn visited. A fine shot by Stansfield just went wide, and at the other end Davies was cleverly pulled up by F. Hawkes when he was becoming alarmingly dangerous. Bushell was penalised for fouling, but Wightman averted disaster, and a corner was then forced off Ashton. Garrett put the ball well across the goal, and Williams headed in, but Naisby brought off a really smart clearance. Stephenson next came into collision with Bulcock, but soon recovered, and Spottiswoode immediately conceded a corner off Lashbrooke. The resultant kick saw Walker head the ball into goal. One of the homesters inadvertently intercepted the effort, but Stephenson secured possession. He was almost on the goal line, and it was quite unexplainable how he came to slam the ball clean out of the ground and miss an excellent chance of placing his side in the ascendancy. The Palace, after this lucky escape, invaded strongly, but Garrett nullified a promising movement by getting offside. He was penalised for a similar infringement a few seconds later, and Brown then got in a fine centre, but Lashbrooke missed when tackled by Collyer, who afterwards conceded a corner, which was not improved upon.

* * *

Another corner was almost immediately forced off Bulcock, but Collyer relieved with a huge kick, and Naisby was deservedly applauded for cleverly negotiating the ball after Ashton had been beaten by Garrett. It was really a brilliant feat. A combined attack by the Palace forwards saw Davies try a cross shot, which just went wide, and Wightman was afterwards hard pressed. He was injured in clearing from the visiting right wing, and had to temporarily retire for attention. With only Ashton at back, the outlook was ominous for Luton, but persistent attacks by the visiting forwards were capitally checked by the home halves. Following Wightman's re-appearance, Bushell was kicked on the knee, which necessitated another stoppage, and, on resuming, Hughes tried a long shot, which went wide.

* * *

Luton continued to hold their own, despite injuries to players, and as the interval approached Bob Hawkes was noticed to be limping. Garrett spoilt another invasion by the Palace through getting offside, and after Hughes and Woodhouse had been penalised for fouling, F. Hawkes stopped a dangerous attack on the right, with Wightman easily beaten. Play was quickly transferred, and Brown, who was displaying good form, got in a fine centre, which caused Johnson much trouble in fisting out. Bob Hawkes afterwards gave a nice pass to Stephenson, but offside nullified a splendid chance of scoring. Just on half-time, the Palace goal had a miraculous escape. Stephenson shot when close in, and the ball rolled over Bulcock, who was on the ground, but when a goal seemed inevitable, Johnson's knee luckily came in the way, and the sphere went over the bar. Interval:—

Luton 0, Crystal Palace 0.

* * *

Upon resuming, Luton attacked, and Brown centred, but Lashbrooke shot wide. Wightman was then called upon to stop a dangerous incursion by Davies and Williams, and Hughes was accidentally placed hors-de-combat. He was soon in action again, and got in a surprisingly good shot from long range. Naisby had no difficulty in saving, however, and uninteresting play ensued. After a while, Davies worked through, only to shoot tamely, and Hewitt put behind when favourably placed. Pressure by the home quintette gave the Palace defenders much anxiety, and at this juncture Walker, who was not fully recovered from a recent injury, went outside right, changing

places with Brown. This was a severe handicap to the Blues, although Ernie worked really finely at inside right. A sprint by the Palace forwards placed the home goal in jeopardy, but Davies kicked weakly by, and Bushell did ditto at the other end.

* * *

Luton now set up a strong bombardment, and nothing but the most deliberate foul could have prevented a score. The ball had hovered dangerously near the Palace citadel for some minutes, and as it came across from the left Brown worked clean through, and was within a yard or two of the goal when he was hauled up from behind as he was in the act of shooting. The referee promptly awarded the homesters a penalty, only for Bob Hawkes, much to the disappointment of the crowd, to shoot wide in an attempt to place the ball in the corner. Fouls became frequent after this, the Palace being conspicuous offenders, and more than one of their players had to be spoken to. Hughes got in a fine drive, which Naisby just managed to tip over the bar, and Wightman cleared from the corner.

* * *

Each side attacked in turn, and for a time there were no really dangerous attempts on either goal. Luton at length assumed the upper hand, a clever run by Stansfield ending in him sending behind. Lashbrooke then badly missed a fine chance from a centre by his partner, following which the Palace forwards became prominent; and Naisby had to clear several shots at close range, one attempt by Hewitt being very near. A smart attack by the visiting inside forwards saw Woodhouse getting through, when Wightman tripped him in the penalty area. The centre was entrusted with the kick, and succeeded in placing the ball well out of the reach of Naisby.

* * *

Elated at this not altogether deserved success, which accrued ten minutes from time, the Palace again attacked, and Wightman was pulled up for fouling Hanger, but nothing tangible resulted. Luton quickly transferred hostilities, and Brown got in a fine oblique shot, from which Lashbrooke vainly attempted to score, the ball going over for a corner, which proved abortive. The few remaining minutes favoured the Palace, and Naisby negotiated a difficult shot from Hewitt, after Wightman had been outpaced. The visiting inside left, in his eagerness to elude Luton's right back, deliberately held him off the ball, but his final shot went wide, and a minute later Wightman conceded a corner. This proved of no avail, and after Johnson had cleared from a corner at the other end, and Lashbrooke had been adjudged offside when in the act of shooting, the whistle sounded for the cessation of the game, with the score:—

CRYSTAL PALACE 1, LUTON 0.

COMMENTS ON THE PLAY AND PLAYERS.

The game was fast and at times exciting, but it would have been much more interesting and satisfactory if the Palace team had been cleaner in their play. In the first half especially, fouls were frequent, and the game was frequently stopped through the referee finding it necessary to call the visiting players to order, and in one or two instances he administered a severe caution. But even then several glaring infringements escaped his notice, and when one of the Luton forwards was deliberately kicked, another hustled off the ball with a vicious push, and another badly tripped, it was not surprising to hear indignant shouts from the spectators.

* * *

The Luton men played well, and it was nothing but downright bad luck that prevented them from gaining two badly-wanted points against the Palace. What could have been more unfortunate than that shot of Stephenson's from only two or three yards out, with the Palace goalkeeper down? The ball struck one of the goalkeeper's legs as he lay at full length across the goal mouth, and, shooting up, soared over, instead of under, the bar. And Bob Hawkes' attempt at a penalty goal!

* * *

Stansfield and Brown were the stay of the forward line, and the latter especially worked hard to retrieve the fortunes of the game when he changed places with Walker, who had become disabled. In the half-back line, Bushell and Fred Hawkes put in some excellent work, and Wightman seemed to have recovered something of his form at back, though he had a nasty shaking up once, and had to receive the attentions of "Billy" Lawson. Naisby in goal was as safe as ever.