

SOUTHERN ALLIANCE.

Neck and Neck.

CROYDON'S GAMENESS ROBS LUTON OF A POINT.

For the second week in succession, Luton were at home to Croydon on Saturday, when Southern Alliance points were at stake. Both teams are doing well in this competition, Croydon having a lead of a point and Luton a game in hand, and as Saturday's result was a draw of two each, the position of the clubs were unaltered at the end of the game. After the fine display given by the visitors in the first match, one could not be accused of undue optimism in anticipating a good game, but although the weather, in strong contrast to the previous week, was gloriously fine, the attendance fell below four thousand.

Neither side can grumble at the result of the match, for while Luton had all the best of the first half, the Robins did most of the pressing subsequently, a fact which is borne out by the scoring. Luton led by 2-0 at half-time, but the visitors well deserved to equalise after the change of ends, and they wasted no time in doing so. The last quarter of an hour saw Luton making strenuous efforts to regain the lead, but even then their rivals were continually breaking away, and threatening Abbott's charge.

Slight alterations were made in both teams. Bob Hawkes resumed his usual place at left-half, and Wileman took the position of inside-right, having as his partner a London amateur named W. G. Jelley. From the Croydon team, R. G. Polson, who scored the only goal on the previous Saturday, was an absentee, his place being taken by Chester, who moved from the outside-left position to let in Jex.

Chief honours as far as Luton are concerned must be awarded to the defenders. Both Henderson and Potts played a splendid game, kicking and tackling almost faultlessly. Abbott was his old cool self between the sticks, and had not the slightest chance of saving the two successful shots, which would have leaved any goalkeeper. The halves were also good, but not quite so scintillating as usual, with the exception, perhaps, of Fred Hawkes, and there was a distinct falling off in the forward line. In the first place Worth had his first day off, and with the exception of scoring the first goal, did not play up to his reputation. Streeton was in that mood when matters refuse to go right, and the same might be said of Stephenson, who was most carefully watched by the opposing half-backs. Wileman was only moderate, and Jelley was outclassed altogether. The Croydon forwards adopted an open, dashing game, and as usual, Yenson, the centre-half, was the "star" man of the team.

Only a minute had elapsed after the kick-off when Luton gained a corner, from which Streeton failed in an almost hopeless position. Quiet mid-field play followed, and then Croydon began to assert themselves. Two corners fell to them, but the best attempt was a shot by Allman which passed just over the bar. The new winger, Jelley, showed his skill by putting across a beautiful centre after good combination with Wileman, and Stephenson missed the goal by inches with a splendid shot. About twenty minutes from the start, Luton scored. Streeton sent the ball across the goal, but Wileman lost control and allowed the goalkeeper to get in his kick. The ball rebounded off Stephenson, but was again stopped by the custodian, and just as Newton was about to clear, Worth dashed into the centre and netted.

Croydon looked like equalising immediately afterwards, Jex receiving a nice pass in front of goal, but Abbott saved his cross shot rather easily. A little feeling crept into the game, and as a result of a number of free kicks awarded them, Luton kept up a persistent attack. They

were not particularly dangerous, however, and it came as a surprise when Stephenson, slipping past the defenders, sent the ball into the net with a cross-shot from a very awkward position. It was a splendid goal, and typical of most that come from the centre's feet. At the other end Abbott brought off one of his clever saves, darting across the goal at a cross shot, which he just turned round the post for a corner. Before the interval both teams nearly scored, Allman missing a "sitter" for Croydon, and Streeton causing Newton to fumble a hot shot.

Luton crossed over with a two-goal lead, but they did not hold it long. Allman broke clean through, and although Abbott saved his first shot, Hemmell, the outside right, sent the ball over the goalie's head into the far corner of the net. Straight from the kick-off, Luton attacked, and Jelley had a fine chance, but he shot straight at the custodian and had to be content with a fruitless corner. Croydon were now having the best of the game, and but for bad centring would have been dangerous. A good one came at last, however, and Jex made no mistake with his shot, thus making the scores two-all. Luton were playing a lethargic game, and the crowd constantly called upon them to wake up. The visiting defenders, however, were playing too well for them to take this advice, and with Croydon playing an open, dashing game, matters began to look ominous for the Blues.

Only offside prevented the visitors scoring when the inside men got clear away, and Abbott had hard work to dispose of a dangerous cross shot. Jex was responsible for the best attempt, but Abbott fisted his sharp, rising shot over the bar, and similarly disposed of the resultant corner. Towards the close, Luton woke up, but Worth made a miserable attempt, and Stephenson also failed when placed in a scoring position by Streeton. With the backs volleying the ball well in front of goal, Luton maintained a heavy pressure, and some of the most exciting play in the match was seen. They went near several times, but not near enough and the whistle went with the score:—

LUTON 2, CROYDON 2.