

F. A. CUP.

CROYDON COMMON v. LUTON.

Played at Selhurst on Saturday. Result:—

Croydon Common.....	2 goals.
Luton	nil.

The teams were as follow:—

Luton—H. Bateman; Henderson and Potts; F. Hawkes, Wilson, and Thompson; Wileman, Streeton, Stephenson, R. Hawkes, and Worth.

Croydon Common — Newton; Little and Hutchins; Yenson, Bushell, and Pace; Chester, Allman, Upex, Jex, and Barnfather.

Referee, Mr. G. L. Miller (East Dereham).

Ever since the draw was announced which sent Luton to Selhurst, it was felt that it would mean a big effort for the visitors to get off with a win, but it was hoped they would at least draw, and then earn the right of playing in the competition proper by winning the second match. The team as selected was the same as proved victorious in the previous round, but R. Hawkes and Streeton exchanged positions with a view to the improvement of each wing, but as events turned out this experiment was not allowed to continue, and an unfortunate accident to Stephenson caused another re-shuffle.

Croydon made several changes in the team which visited Luton earlier in the season, Bushell, Upex, and Barnfather opposing Luton for the first time. But the fact was that it was not altogether the alteration in the home side which caused so much misgiving as the state of the playing pitch at Selhurst. At this period of the season it is always a matter of doubt as to whether the ground is fit, and the rain which fell more or less during the greater part of the previous week naturally rendered the playing area a regular quagmire and certainly presented a severe handicap to the Luton players, who were of course not so well acquainted with its peculiarities as the Robins. To tell the truth, in many ways it resembled certain of the Welsh pitches, except for size.

The fact that Crystal Palace were playing at home spoilt any chance of getting a big gate, and although certain Croydon officials were hoping to see 6,000 present, it was generally agreed that the amount taken, namely, £112, was as much as could reasonably be expected under all the circumstances. Still, this means that poorly as Luton have fared in previous seasons from the result of the Cup-ties, this will be the worst of the series for a long time past, and just when help was most needed, too.

The game opened quietly; Newton, it is true, was quickly called upon by Wileman, but the shot was from too long a range, and never caused the least anxiety. This attempt was followed by several others of the same kind, Bob Hawkes and Stephenson both trying to find the net from well outside the penalty area. After a few minutes' midfield play, the Robins got away and gave Bateman his first shot to stop. He did not gather cleanly, but managed to prevent it entering the net, and Chester, who met the return, could do no better than force an unproductive corner.

• Barnfather was proving very troublesome on the left, and it took the combined efforts of Wilson and Henderson to prevent his getting in a shot after a clever run down the wing. Although the attack was beaten off, the opening goal which generally means so much in a Cup-tie was not long in coming, and in the easiest manner possible. The ball was slung over to the left wing, and Upex getting a pass, was observed to be making straight for goal. Potts finding his partner too far up the field to be of any service, crossed over and forced Upex well on to the left, which thus left the other side of the field quite unprotected, and Upex screwing the ball across. Allman and Chester had the simplest task in the world to score, for either of them could set the ball and place it well out of Bateman's reach, so unmarked were they. Allman was the one who received the pass, and he made no mistake with his shot.

Luton had a chance soon after the re-start when Wileman centred and Little only partially cleared; the ball travelled to Worth, but the latter made a poor attempt, shooting by very tamely. As a rule, however, the Robins were playing the smarter football, and several corners fell to them without producing any goals. Bateman saved twice in quick succession when first Barnfather and then Chester got the better of the Luton backs. This was followed by another attack, and Bateman brought off a

good save from Upex close in, Thompson luckily clearing the ball from the rebound.

Just before the interval, Stephenson made one of his characteristic dashes down the centre, and one of the home backs and Yenson were intent on stopping him. Stephenson managed to jump over the full-back's outstretched leg, but Yenson crashed into him, and the Luton centre went down evidently badly injured. It appears that Stephenson's knee received the full force of either the boot or knee of the Croydon half-back, and it gave the whole joint a severe wrench. After a little attention from Lawson on the field, Stephenson was eventually carried off on the trainer's back, and was attended in the dressing-room by a local doctor, who pronounced that although no bones were broken it was a bad wrench. No further score took place before the interval, and Croydon were quite deservedly leading at this stage.

A re-arrangement of the forwards was made, Bob Hawkes and Wileman playing inside to Werth and Streeton, but, naturally, the centre-forward was badly missed, and for a time Croydon continued to enjoy the better of the play. It is true Stephenson did come on again for a few minutes, but after trying to centre the ball from outside-left, he found it was quite useless, and he limped off the field for good, without having been of the slightest service. Left with only four forwards, Luton's task seemed somewhat hopeless, but they actually forced the game for quite a sustained attack, and hopes arose that even yet an equalising point might raise the drooping spirits of the Lutonians on the stand, and they urged their favourites on with encouraging cries. One chance at least fell to Luton when Streeton, with a clever run, eluded the attentions of the home defenders and squared the ball almost from the goal-line. The ball came to Worth's toe, and it seemed an odds-on chance for a goal, but to the delight of the Robins' supporters, he sent the leather yards over, and Luton's only real opportunity went.

It is practically certain that a goal at this stage would have forced a replay, for it was only fifteen minutes from time, and, with depleted forces, it would have been good policy to play a purely defensive game, but being still a goal behind, meant playing the open game in order to force the play, and naturally this gave the Robins more opportunities to get away. Bateman, however, was equal to all the shots which came to hand, and it appeared quite likely the narrowest possible margin would be the final result, although there was just a chance of an equalising goal to encourage Luton until five minutes from time, when a badly taken goal kick quite settled the result.

Bateman, it appears, either miskicked or kicked the ground when the ball was tipped back to him, and Upex standing a few yards out, had the good fortune to receive it with an open goal to shoot at, and making no mistake, scored Croydon's second point. All interest at once fell flat, and it was only a question of playing out time.

Undoubtedly the Robins fully deserved their win on the actual play, but Luton were unfortunate in losing so important a player for the whole of the second half. It was during this stage that the most determined effort was made to redeem the situation, and with a full forward line it is quite possible a different result would have come about. Bateman had certainly more dangerous shots to stop than Newton, and did well in defending his charge, and it was therefore unlucky that the second goal should have been caused through a slip in taking the goal kick.

We are asked to say that it was found impossible to arrange for getting the intermediate state of the game at Croydon on Saturday at the Luton League match, in consequence of the only telephone on the ground being in full use for the London Press, while a telegram could not have reached the Town ground until after the half-time and final scores had been announced, these being arranged through the usual Press agency from London. Every effort was made to get through, but at last it was given up as hopeless after consultation with the local exchange, where inquiries were made before the attempt was finally given up

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A letter has been received from a correspondent, protesting against the alleged incompetence or unfairness of some of the referees who officiate in the Luton Wednesday matches, but as it is claimed that one team only suffers from this sort of thing, I venture to suggest that the partiality may rest quite as much with the critic as with the criticised. In any case, the letter is not one that we should be justified in publishing.