

CROYDON COMMON v. LUTON.

Played at Selhurst on Saturday. Result :—

Croydon Common 3 goals.

Luton 1 goal.

The teams were as follow :—

Luton—H. Bateman; Henderson and Potts; F. Hawkes, Thompson, and Wilson; Wileman, Murphy, Smith, R. Hawkes, and Johnson.

Croydon Common — G. Watson; Little and Hutchins; Yenson, Bushell, and Pace; Chester, Allman, Page, Upex, and Barnfather.

Referee, Mr. F. Barton (Ealing).

Originally fixed for Feb. 1st, this Southern Alliance match was brought forward a week at the request of Croydon, to avoid clashing with the F.A. Cup-tie at the Crystal Palace. It was recognised that the result would have an important bearing on the championship, and quite 4,000 spectators assembled. The three previous games between the teams this season had resulted in a win, draw, and loss to each side, and therefore the Robins now have the advantage.

It will be observed both teams were relying upon their amateur goalkeepers, and the only other line which had undergone any material change since the Cup-tie was forward. Croydon played their latest capture at centre-forward, but Upex was retained in the front rank to the exclusion of Jex. On the other hand, Luton had only Wileman and R. Hawkes of their Cup-tie vanguard.

The opening movement led up to a long-range shot from Page, but Bateman promptly disposed of this, and before the spectators had settled down Luton were a goal up, and a fine point it was. Johnson coming through in great style, beat off the attentions of both Yenson and Little, and dropping the leather nicely across, Wileman, who

had worked into the goal-mouth, beat Watson with a splendidly-placed ball. Evidently the Robins were rather surprised by this early success, and for some minutes Luton monopolised the attack, without, however, seriously testing Watson.

At the opposite goal Bateman failed to gather properly another long shot from Page, but he just managed to dodge Upex when that player made a dash for possession. Then followed another dashing run on the part of Johnson, which culminated in a dangerous-looking centre, but Watson saved cleverly, and after a spell of quiet play the ball was brought into the vicinity of the Luton goal. Henderson, in trying to clear, could do no better than kick a corner. This was well placed by Chester, and Page meeting the ball with his head, neatly turned it into goal. Bateman just managed to prevent it entering the net direct, but could only punch the ball on the upright, and it rebounded through, to the relief of the home spectators, who did not at all relish seeing their side a goal behind. No one could blame Bateman, for he did well to touch the ball at all as it glanced off Page's head.

From this point the locals never looked back, and within a minute Bateman was compelled to concede yet another corner when hard pressed. But this was not so well placed as the former one. Bateman saved from Page and Upex in quick succession, while a minute later Henderson just managed to stop Upex as he was making direct for goal. There was a clamour for a penalty, but the referee would not agree, and eventually Bateman cleared, Henderson finally putting the ball well down the field.

But the relief was not for long, and Allman getting a pass from his partner, squared the ball for Upex to put on the winning goal from close range. Several Luton players made the fatal mistake of not playing to the whistle, or this disaster might not have happened at this stage. It appears that Wilson was pushed over by Chester well down the field, and a foul undoubtedly should have been awarded, but the referee had not seen it, and he allowed the game to proceed. Still, on the run of the game, the Robins were quite entitled to the lead. Although Smith had a chance to equalise before the interval, he failed to take advantage, and Watson, dashing out, saved the situation.

There was a stoppage for the referee to administer a caution to Smith for something that happened in the goal-mouth following a centre from Johnson. The crowd shouted for the Luton player to be sent off, but they were silent a minute later when the referee gave Hutchins a similar warning for his tactics in a scramble. On the whole the game was pleasantly contested, and half-time found the Robins leading by the odd goal in three.

Bob Hawkes made a gallant attempt to equalise matters with a fine drive from 30 yards' range, but Watson saved well, and the game became colourless for some minutes afterwards. On the whole, however, the Robins were more often the attacking party, Upex in particular getting dangerous once or twice, but no further impression was made during the first part of the final "45."

Luton certainly made a slight diversion as a result of a free kick, Murphy having had luck with a good, hot drive which was travelling in the right direction, but the ball rebounded off a Croydon defender who happened to stand in the way. Thompson meeting the return, sent it well over, and the opportunity passed. A similar award to Croydon also promised to result in a goal, but Bateman pounced on the ball, although he was forced over the line while holding, and a corner kick resulted. This was well placed, and two or three attempts were made to get it through, but eventually Yenson sent the ball flying over the bar.

Fouls were now rather frequent, both sides being at fault, although, as usual, the home crowd rather emphasised those given against Luton. A loud shout went up for a free kick when Thompson robbed Page in midfield by a clever and perfectly fair tackle; indeed, it was one of the best efforts the Luton centre-half put in during the game, and the referee paid no heed to the clamour. But about a quarter of an hour from the finish, all hope of Luton saving the game vanished when a penalty kick was presented to Croydon. It is pretty certain the referee made a mistake on this occasion, for Henderson simply went for the ball at the same time as Barnfather, and the latter fell when Henderson reached out his leg to get the ball. However, the referee gave the penalty, and Upex sending in a swift drive, gave Bateman no chance to save.

It was now merely a question of playing out time, for Luton gave no evidence of being able to pull the game out of the fire, and little interest was taken until about two minutes before the finish. At this late stage of the game Luton were awarded their first corner, and, curiously, Wileman, who took the flag kick, actually had to take no fewer than four corners in succession before danger was averted, this being about the longest sustained attack Luton put up during a rather uneventful game.

There was always a chance for an equalising point while the margin was one goal only, but taking the match through, the Robins fully deserved their win. They were just that little bit superior in every department, with the possible exception of goal, where Watson was not tested sufficiently to bring out his powers in comparison with Bateman. Probably the greatest difference between the two teams was at full back, for Little and Hutchins always appeared able to repel the somewhat feeble attempts of the Luton front string, while Henderson and Potts were often hard pressed and were lucky several times to get out of awkward situations.

The home halves appeared to do much better with the ball when they got it than the Luton trio, and Bushell acted as a feeder to his inside forwards, while Yenson and Pace were strongest in defence. Fred Hawkes was the most successful of the Luton middle line. The Luton forwards did not impress one as a combination, Wileman and Bob Hawkes being the two who mostly threatened danger. Johnson's run which led up to the first goal was a fine one, but somehow he seldom seemed able to get

the ball in the later stages. Murphy was clever at times and tricked his half neatly, but was often robbed by being too long in making up his mind what to do with the ball. Smith, however, played a very poor game and was little in evidence. Upex, moved, to inside-left, appeared to be the leader of most of the Croydon attacks, although Page was quite a success in the centre, and the line as a whole were more effective than Luton.