

## BEST PERFORMANCE OF THE SEASON.

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### Elvey makes a Sensational Debut as a Half-back.

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### Fred Hawkes earns a Point for fine Goal from Inside Right.

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The constitution of Luton's team against Newport County on Foxing Day prepared the 600 excursionists on Saturday for a scratchy team at Selhurst, but it was a surprise even to them to find a still further shuffle had to be made in positions to turn out a team for the most important game of the holiday programme. Although he did not feel the full effect of it during the game the previous day Bob Hawkes had the misfortune to wrench his knee, and on Saturday morning he found it was quite impossible to run, much less kick a football. It was therefore a serious question as to what was to be done, for with Mitchell, Durrant, R. Hawkes, Simms, Wileman and Rollinson all out of the question through illness or injury, there was only Robinson left to make up an eleven, and if another player had turned up unfit through any cause it would have been impossible to have turned out eleven players at Selhurst. Fortunately there were no other casualties, and this eleven had to be moulded into a team somehow. It was decided to leave Robinson in his proper position at right back, and move Elvey and F. Hawkes respectively one line forward, and give the centre forward berth to Stevens, thus bringing in Donaghy at outside right once more, while Brewis partnered Wilkie. It was, on paper, at any rate, a strange combination, but on the journey up the players expressed themselves as determined to make a fight of it against their strongest rivals, and, as the sequel shows, they came out of ordeal much better than the majority of their supporters expected.

Croydon, who had enjoyed a most successful holiday, were in a much more fortunate position, and were only short of Chester from their regular Southern League side, and Upex took his place. The Nest at Selhurst is the nearest approach to Welsh pitches it is possible to get in English Southern League circles. The Lutonians present had some idea of what the players have to tackle in meeting clubs on such grounds, but even this was much better than several pitches in the Rhondda district. Still it was described by some one as similar to the foreshore at Southend when the tide was out, with pools of water standing all



about, and as little like a football ground as it is possible to imagine.

The teams as they turned out were as under:—

Luton:—Abbott; Robinson and Jarvie; Elvey, Frith and Wilson; Donaghy, F. Hawkes, Stevens, Brewis and Wilkie.

Croydon Common:—Williamson; Little and Hutchins; Yenson, Bushell and Nash; Kingaby, Allman, Page, Upex, and Barnfather.

Referee, Mr. C. W. Gillett, London.

When the teams turned out each had a rousing reception from their respective supporters. At that portion of the enclosure from which the Luton players took the field the blue and white favours appeared to predominate, and they would almost feel at home until they reached the actual playing area. There was quite a fair breeze, and Fred Hawkes winning the toss naturally decided to kick "with wind and tide" as was remarked on the stand. It was quite refreshing, particularly after the Newport game on Christmas Day, to find the Luton forward line in an aggressive mood, and most wonderful to relate they combined very effectively. Indeed, during the first half an hour a stranger to the side would have thought they had played together all the season. Certainly it was an eye-opener to the Robins' supporters, who never expected their pets to be so overplayed.

Quite early in the game, Fred Hawkes almost netted with a fine shot which skimmed the bar, and this was followed up by other attempts from Wilkie and Stevens, but no goals came from several really promising movements. Apparently the Croydon players could not understand the state of affairs at all, and at times the exchanges became rather heated, and fouls were pretty frequent, although most of them were the result of excitement. Frith and Page got at loggerheads once or twice, and on one occasion the referee gave the Robins the benefit of a free kick straight in front of goal just outside the penalty area, but Yenson sent the ball yards too high over the bar. Almost directly afterwards the Luton portion of the stand were roused to enthusiasm by a splendid goal netted by Fred Hawkes, and one could almost imagine they were at Luton, so loud and prolonged was the cheering. It was a prettily worked for point, too. Wilkie got the ball across nicely to the centre, and Stevens, who was hampered, neatly headed it to Fred Hawkes, who with a cross shot found the net.

Stevens was a regular worry to the Robins' defenders, and he was only prevented going clean through by a nasty foul on one occasion. Brewis took the place kick, but Hutchins just got in the way, and the ball glanced off the Croydon full back into touch. Naturally there were occasional break-aways by the Robins, and once Page got well into the Luton penalty area before shooting, only to find Abbott in fine form, and the Luton goalkeeper throwing himself full length turned the shot away for a corner. In getting his head to a pass right across the field Nash was temporarily knocked out, but he did not leave the field, and the game went on, hard knocks being freely given and taken on both sides. Just before the interval Stevens got a very bad kick on the knee joint, which slowed him up considerably. Still he stuck to his work, and Luton kept up the pressure well, and were by no means flattered by the half-time score of—Luton 1, Croydon Common 0.

It was evident that the wind had been a strong factor in the game, for on turning round Luton could not get the ball away in the same manner as before, and most of the play remained at the top of the field. The home forwards for a time were well in the picture, and the Luton defence were kept hard at it to prevent a score. Corner after corner was taken by Croydon, but they could not manage to get the better of Abbott until twenty minutes after crossing over. Page was the actual scorer, and he jumped yards in the air when he found he had succeeded in equalising matters. It was now Croydon's turn to cheer, and the crowd gave vent to their relief at this goal by a tremendous demonstration of joy. Most of the credit must be given to Barnfather, who neatly tricked Robinson and squared the ball to Page to steer through. It was now a long struggle for victory on the part of the Robins, but Fred Hawkes fell back and strengthened the defence, and so well did they hold out that it was evident long before the close that no further goals would be netted except for some unlucky accident. Abbott made several grand saves, it is true, but he never appeared at all nervous, and when he left the field at the finish he received many a hearty slap on the back for his good work in a very exciting match, the result of which was:—Luton 1, Croydon Common 1.

Luton thoroughly deserved their point for the plucky way they overcame the terrible handicap through injuries, etc. There are scores of combinations suggested by would-be team builders at times, but certainly no one would have named the actual side as constituted at Selhurst for this important fixture. Undoubtedly the discovery of the game was Elvey at right half. For most of the game he had Barnfather completely in his pocket, as one happy Lutonian expressed himself at the finish. His tackling was fine, and on the muddy pitch his long kicks were more than useful. Each of the other Luton halves did well. Wilson worked like a nigger, and at the finish he almost resembled one. Frith also played in his now well-known style, and as a line the halves were greatly superior to the Robins' intermediate trio. Abbott's work in goal has been mentioned above several times. Let it be said that he has proved a most able substitute for Mitchell all the holiday, and it was remarked that in this position Luton have not suffered at all. Jarvie was the better back, and was in consequence not at all popular with some of the Robins' supporters, but Robinson, on the whole, did very well, and made very few mistakes.

It was not to be expected the Luton forwards as constituted could keep up the pressure of the first half hour, but during that period they played a marvellous game, Stevens making a very thrustful centre forward. Fred Hawkes more than came up to expectations, and Brewis until he tired in the second half was a really effective inside left.

Croydon, as is well known, possess a fine pair of backs, but they were greatly harassed by the Luton front string in the early stages. Still they played a strong defensive game, and by their steadiness at this stage kept the Luton score down to the smallest limit, and thus paved the way for a drawn game when they turned round. The Robins were best served in attack by Page and Barnfather. Kingaby, as at Luton in the cup-tie, was not a great success, failing badly several times to get the ball across when well placed.