

# CROYDON COMMON v. LUTON.

Played at Selhurst, on Saturday. Result:—

|               |         |
|---------------|---------|
| Luton .....   | 1 goal. |
| Croydon ..... | 1 goal. |

The teams were as follow:—

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, Uper, and Barnfather.

Referee: Mr. C. W. Gillett (London).

It will be noticed that the Robins were only compelled to make one change from their Cup team, but although Luton had seven of the players which beat Croydon in the Cup-tie, the team as a whole was such a mix-up that very few Lutonians hoped for a repetition of that three goal victory. After the game on Boxing Day it was thought that the tale of injuries had come to an end, but although he did not feel much of it at the time, Bob Hawkes gave his knee a nasty wrench. On Saturday morning he could not run, and it was quite an impossibility for him to play, much as he would like to have done. It is rather curious that Luton have already played the Robins four times this season, and yet Bob has never been out against them for his own club, although he was on the winning side for the Rest of the Alliance in the representative match, which is the only time the Robins have had to strike their colours at home this season.

Notwithstanding the scratchy team which it was known would represent Luton, they were accompanied by at least 600 supporters, and they were a merry crowd before the match, but when they found their pets were more than holding their own in the first half, their joy knew no bounds, and they were very generous with their condolences to "Poor Cock Robin." Even when a change came over the scene in the second half, they were delighted at the manner the overworked defence stood their ground, and when the final whistle went and Luton had done what no other team had accomplished, in that they had secured a valuable Southern League point, they simply rose at the Luton players as they filed into the dressing room. It was a much better wind up than the majority anticipated, and so much the sweeter morsel in consequence.

In their different spheres, with the exception of Donaghy, each player at times gave their supporters cause to rejoice, and if Abbott, Elvey and Fred Hawkes came in for the most part of it, it is only because they came out of a difficult position with flying colours, when either of them could have been excused for a slip under the trying conditions which they were compelled to face. For it was a big test for Abbott to stand in the breach in such an important match with so little practice this season, but he rose to the occasion in the most approved fashion, and never gave his comrades the least anxiety, while he brought off at least half-a-dozen thrilling saves.

Elvey, of course, was playing out of his position, but with three full backs on the field, it was unavoidable that one should play in a new place, and Elvey being regarded as the superior tackler, he was brought into the half-back line. His display was an eye-opener to his most enthusiastic admirers, and he has many at Luton. He never allowed the Croydon left wing the least bit of rope, and it was seldom they got through. Although, of course, it was impossible to prevent one of them getting an occasional kick at the ball, in the large majority of instances Elvey came off top-dog, and Barnfather had very few chances to shine.

It was not the first time that Fred Hawkes has figured in the forward line, but lately his appearances there have been so few that he was quite out of practice as a member of the attacking brigade, but he had the honour of scoring the first and only goal scored of the current season in the Southern League tournament, against the League leaders at the Nest. He had hard lines, too, in not getting one just after the start, with a grand shot which skimmed the bar. Towards the finish Fred was chiefly engaged in defence, but he did his share in the splendid forward work put in during the opening stages, which did so much to earn the unexpected point on this ground.

Of the other members of the team, Jarvie played finely at full back, and if Robinson failed to live up to the reputation he gained in the famous Cup-tie, he played a much safer game than in some previous matches. Frith was always well in the picture, while no one on the field worked harder than Wilson. As a trio the Luton halves were again a superior middle line to that of their opponents, Stevens, until he received a nasty kick on the knee, was a source of anxiety to the home defenders, and Bushell had quite a big job to hold him. Until the strain of three matches in so many days told

its tale. Brewis did quite well as inside partner to Wilkie, and gave the outside-left some of the chances to have a shot at goal, of which he took advantage, and it was rather bad luck that Wilkie did not net at least one goal. Williamson only just preventing the shot entering the net by dropping on the ball as it was travelling inside the upright from a well-judged drive. Donaghy was to some extent handicapped in the second half by the fact that his partner was more engaged in defence than attack, but he was the least effective player on the side taking the game through.

Croydon were evidently quite surprised by the manner Luton set about them in the first half, and it took them all that period to recover from the shock. Still, they played their usual vigorous game, and the match was ninety minutes of hard football. Seeing it was the third fixture in as many days, the pace was extraordinary, and it was no surprise to find a little slackening off towards the finish. Williamson and his two backs stood to their guns in great style, or it would have been a sensational score that would have flashed over the wires at half-time. The Robins' vanguard, when they had the advantage of the wind after change of ends, rallied finely, and but for the gallant way the Luton defence played, must have pulled the game out of the fire. As it was, a draw was a fitting result to the struggle, for such it was, and neither set of players will be called upon to take part in a harder game this season.

Fred Hawkes was successful in winning the toss, and playing with the wind the new Luton forward line at once made their presence felt and, to the surprise of everybody, were combining in great style, the ball being brought along as if they had played together all the season. So much were they the superior in the attack, that it was evident that with ordinary luck they must get a goal, if only the form could be kept up. Fred Hawkes almost did the trick quite early with a fine attempt, which just missed the bar, while at the opposite end of the field Abbott gave the Lutonians present an opportunity to cheer when he fell full length to a good shot from Allman and pushed it round the post.

But the ball was not long in this vicinity, for the Luton forwards were still playing a fine forcing game. Eventually Wilkie got across a grand centre, which Stevens met with his head and passed the ball over to Fred Hawkes, who cleverly steered it through, and a loud shout of delight went up from the Luton portion of the stand. This was the only goal up to the interval, and the Croydon spectators were all agreed the lead was well deserved on the play. As previously mentioned, it was the first time they had seen their team behind in a Southern League match.

On turning round it was soon patent that Luton would have a big task to maintain their advantage, for now that Croydon had the wind they were able to get the ball along much better, and the game developed into a series of attacks on Abbott's charge. In the first minute of the second half Abbott prevented a great shot from Page entering the net, and later he stopped shots from Kingsby, Barnfather, and Allman. Midway through this half, however, he was helpless to prevent a ground shot from Page taking effect, the Croydon man trapping a nice centre from Barnfather, who rounded Robinson in clever style before parting with the ball, and Page literally jumped for joy when he found he had been successful in placing the ball in the far corner of the net.

This goal was a great relief to the home officials, who had almost made up their minds they were in for a defeat, so well had the Luton defence held out against the hot attacks set up since the interval. With this goal the home supporters' hopes were roused, and they called for one more, but the Lutonians maintained their stubborn resistance right up to the end. The Robins had many free kicks awarded them close to the penalty area, and on one occasion they were given a second chance after the Luton defenders had cleared the first attempt, apparently on account of someone encroaching nearer than the ten yards now allowed for place kicks.

During the game many hard knocks were given and taken, but, considering the excitement, it was a very good game and never lacked interest, while the pace was a cracker until just before the end. The gate was a record for the ground in Second Division matches, and during the holidays Croydon have netted just on £500.

# FOOTBALL NOTES.

## Luton's Chances.

### ANOTHER SEASON IN THE SECOND DIVISION?

[By CRUSADER].

Luton have averaged one point for each of their matches during the Christmas period and had themselves in the second position in the table. Christmas is always a time of surprises, and after Luton had failed rather miserably at Newport on Christmas Day and scraped home by a mere goal on their own pitch in the return match on Boxing Day, it was in the nature of a surprise, considering the peculiar formation of the Luton team, to find that they could draw at Croydon. There was some luck on Luton's side, but also a good deal of fine play, particularly by Abbott, who has hitherto this season been almost without practice because of the fine form of Mitchell. But Mitchell's Cup-tie injury was Abbott's chance, and he has proved once more what a capital goalkeeper he is. Luton were the first team to score this season at the Nest, and it is all the more credit to them, seeing that they did so with a team very different from what would have been considered their best. But unusual circumstances often lead to valuable discoveries, and the placing of Elvey in the half-back line showed what fine things Elvey can do there. Fred Hawkes was also in a position which has been an unusual one for him for some years, but he rose to the occasion and had the credit of scoring that precious goal.

In spite of the good displays of individual men, there cannot be whole-hearted satisfaction over the position of the Club in regard to promotion. Three points out of three matches is not exactly on the straight road to the First Division. Recognising that two of those three matches were away and that one of them was against probably the best side in the competition, there is yet room for desiring more, when one looks at the position of Croydon and Brentford. Of course, Luton did have misfortune in the indisposition of players, but that, it should be noted, was chiefly after the loss of a match which ought to have yielded at least one point, and might reasonably have been expected to produce two.

The fact is, although one does not like to think so or damp the spirit of anyone in connection with the Club (in fact the object of mentioning it is to effect the opposite), Luton are just going on in the path of mediocrity which resulted in a circular tour in the Second Division last season. It is practically no argument to the contrary to produce the League table up-to-date and indicate Luton in the happy position of being second, for that will immediately provoke comparison with their fellow leaders. Luton look unlike ousting Croydon from the leadership, as the Robins have played all their stiff away matches except that at Luton, while Brentford, with four games in hand, are only three points behind Luton and have lost only one match. In fact, in goal scoring and in defence (they have only three goals against them compared with 14 against Luton), Brentford are relatively in a much stronger position, and yet they are not content but are seeking to strengthen their team further. It is to be hoped that the week's rest given to the Luton players in consequence of next Saturday's match being postponed through Llanelli's participation in the Welsh Cup, will enable them all to return in the pink of condition and to start in the New Year a campaign which will carry them to promotion at the end of the present season.

The tale of Luton players' injuries takes a paragraph to itself. As to the yarn about Simms being suspended, it may be at once stated that there is no truth in it. The centre-forward, it will be remembered, remained behind at his home in South Shields after the Cup-tie replay there, and he was to have been back for the Aberdare match at Luton on the Saturday, but he wired on the Friday that he was ill and could not come, but would try to return in time for the Christmas programme. This message, however, was followed on the Saturday by a doctor's certificate, stating that Simms was suffering from gastritis and would not be able to come for some days. On Boxing Day Simms

wrote a letter, which, owing probably to the Christmas postal traffic, was not received in Luton until Sunday, saying he had got up that day and would come on Monday for certain, but as all the other players are not doing any training this week in consequence of the postponement of the fixture with Llanelli, the Secretary wired to Simms that there was no match and subsequently informed him by letter that there was no necessity to return this week.

Simms will come back next Monday, and will probably play on the following Saturday in the Charity Cup match at Coventry. Rollinson has been suffering from a severe chill, but is out again now. Wileman's injured thigh is improving. Though he may be fit to play at Coventry, perhaps he will not turn out, because it would be wiser to make sure of a thorough recovery. Durrant is recovering from his thigh trouble, and Mitchell's badly wrenched knee is improving. Bob Hawkes' injury also consisted of a wrenched knee. This was contracted in the Boxing Day match. He did not feel it much at the time, but the next morning he could hardly walk. It is fortunate that there is no match next Saturday, seeing the "crooked" condition of so many of the Luton team. The Llanelli match may take place here on February 28th. That is the date arranged at present, but Llanelli have yet to get another match altered in order to do so. The Town Ground on Saturday will be utilised for a Luton League match between the Trinity and Rowdale.