

FOOTBALL.

Luton's Good Start.

Points from Plymouth Argyle.

[By CRUSADER].

Luton on Saturday made an auspicious start in their home matches on returning to the First Division of the Southern League. Plymouth Argyle are not one of the soft things of the competition, and a win of 2-1 was not at all bad on the part of Luton's youngsters against the more veteran Argyle. But certainly the reduction of the margin of victory ought not to have been allowed by the home team. The Argyle's goal was the result of a misunderstanding on the Luton side, and it rather spoilt the look of the score.

Teams:—

Luton Town: Mitchell; Elvey and Robinson; F. Hawkes, Frith and Needham; Roberts, Wilman, Simms, Rollinson and Hoar.

Plymouth Argyle: Horne; Forbes and Russell; McCormick, Wilcox and Baker; Kirkpatrick, H. W. Raymond, Burch, Bowler and Blott.

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

Result:—

Luton	2 goals.
Plymouth	1 goal.

The weather was very nice, from the spectators' point of view, and there were a good many people glad to get away, at any rate for a short time, from the distractions of the effects of war and trade worries. But they were reminded of the prevailing conditions by the khaki tinge given to the crowd by the presence of Territorials, of whom there were about 2,000 present. Those soldiers in uniform who used the Ivy-road entrance were allowed in at half-price. A few of them were acquainted with some of the players. At any rate, Roberts, the Luton outside-right, spent last season in Lincolnshire (at Scunthorpe), and, of course, there are very many of the Lincolns stationed at Luton now. At half-time one of the Plymouth players had a chat over the rails with some rediscovered acquaintances. Altogether there were about 8,000 spectators present, the gate receipts amounting to £177. That is as compared with 6,000 attendance and £140 receipts at the opening match last year, but in that case the opponents were Mardy—far less attraction than the Argyle—and the expenses of the Luton club are now from £40 to £50 a fortnight more than last season.

For the first part the game was a capital one to watch, both sets of players putting their best into it. With the exception of Blott, who is a very weighty player, the Plymouth forwards seemed of the long, greyhound type, and they set a very good pace, but the Luton men were enthusiastically desirous of proving their worthiness to First Division position, and they saw to it that Plymouth were well matched. The Argyle had their forces reduced quite early through Kirkpatrick getting his nose broken. They proceeded with four forwards. Later, finding themselves getting beaten, they played the one back game to a sickening extent. Forbes kept up among the halves, and time after time the Luton forwards were pulled up.

Of course, the Argyle could excuse themselves on the ground that they were one man short and one goal down, but it completely spoilt the sport from the spectators' point of view. It fell to Russell to be the one back. He made an inglorious show really. Russell, who has just joined the Argyle, is a Welsh International, but he showed very little International form. He went in a good deal for jumping, and he did not treat his compatriot Roberts so well as he might have done. He had a trick when beaten of swinging his foot round behind him with the intention of stopping his opponent that way. He was particularly successful once in beating Hoar in that style, and it was a pity that the incident had not occurred a few yards nearer goal than it was; it would have then been in the penalty area and there would have been some possibility of adequately punishing his action.

Luton's opening goal was scored in about the first five minutes. Plymouth commenced by swinging the ball about in excellent style, but the Luton men were very lively, Frith in particular doing a good deal of tackling. Once Burch did get into his stride beautifully for goal when Frith bundled him off the ball. Roberts' practice match form is proving no mere temporary affair. Already his splendid centres while on the run have been of very material benefit to Luton. It was with one of these that he dropped the ball in front of the Argyle goal and opened the way for the first score. Rollinson rushed up and drove the ball in hard, but it hit an Argyle man and rebounded. But Hoar got it, and though Horne threw himself at the ball, Hoar sent it into goal hard between Horne and the upright.

Playing with their complete team, the Argyle should be fairly formidable, and it was a great pity that the conditions should have so turned as to spoil what had promised to be a thorough contest right through. With the team thrown out of gear as the result of Kirkpatrick's absence and the one-back game, it is difficult to form a good idea of the Argyle's capabilities. Russell and Forbes seem to have adopted some of the style of Butler and Atterbury. Forbes is certainly the more interesting of the present pair. Wilcox is no doubt a clever centre-half, but at present, like Blott, he seems to have a lot of superfluous weight. The amateur Raymond, and Burch and Bowler are a good centre trio of forwards. Of Blott's play one could not see a great deal. Elvey was too much of a match for him.

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After Luton's first goal, the Argyle seemed so dangerous that it would have been not much surprise if they had scored, but gradually the home halves and backs wore them down, and Hoar changed the aspect of things with a delightful run on his wing. He then bore inwards and on being tackled passed to Rollinson, who, with a fine rising shot, directed the ball to just under the bar. Horne, however, knocked it clear. Frith came along with clever play, and after tricking two men passed to Roberts, who ran inwards with the ball. Wileman was about to shoot from short range when Forbes cut right across his path and cleared in the nick of time.

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Horne made a very clever save from Simms, who hooked the ball inwards from Roberts' centre. The ball was curving away from Horne as he punched it, and the crowd cheered the Plymouth man's smart work. In the next moment Simms, still closer up, turned the ball in and Horne saved by instinctively bringing his legs together. The ball hit just below his knees and rebounded clear of the attack. Hard luck for Simms. Elvey and Robinson were quite masters of the Plymouth men whenever they got past the halves, and Mitchell had nothing to do. Finding themselves thus outclassed, Plymouth resorted to the one-back annoyance, and so things went on. At half-time Luton led by 1-0, and it was some time before they obtained their second.

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In fact, on restarting Plymouth seemed determined to equalise, and the home defence had about as trying a time as they had at any period throughout the match, but there was no hesitation about their clearances, and when once they had really driven Plymouth back, Luton took up the attack with considerable success, and Russell showed himself to be sorely tried. About twenty minutes after the interval, Needham gave a neat forward pass to Hoar, who ran on and then dropped the ball across. Simms' shot was kept out, but Wileman following up close, got the ball in well to Horne's right, and Luton led by the nice-looking score of 2-0.

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Simms had very hard lines with a nice header which missed by only a few inches. Less than ten minutes later, the Argyle scored their goal. Breaking away on their left, one of their men managed to turn the ball almost on the goal line and bringing it round, dropped it across to the goal. The shot really ought to have been cleared, and apparently Mitchell, who threw himself at it, knocked it down to clear, but he and Fred Hawkes, who had dropped back, misunderstood one another, and before either moved to get the ball away, Raymond scored. Every Luton player and spectator was terribly disappointed, because the goal really should have been prevented, but such things will happen however hard players strive. In fact, it is sometimes (as it was no doubt in this case) because they try so hard, otherwise Fred Hawkes would not have been in that position.

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Plymouth almost put on a second when Blott sent in a fine drive from the left, and in the last few minutes they made great efforts. Once their right wing nearly broke clean through, but Elvey came across and cleared. Horne made a clever save from Rollinson, who sent in a capital shot after Roberts had dashed up the wing, eluded a lunge by Russell and passed to the inside left. Plucky little Roberts almost brought down the Argyle on his own just before the end. He certainly brought down Horne—right on top of himself, too. Horne is a six-footer, with heaps of weight, but Roberts got up again quite cheerful to take the corner which Horne had conceded by throwing the ball over the line as the safest way out of the difficulty. There the play ended so far as interest is concerned.

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There has been a good deal of speculation as to whether Luton's team would be of sufficient class to meet First Division Southern League teams. Their supporters had some opportunity of judging on Saturday, and although one game does not make a season any

more than one swallow makes a summer, there was something to go upon. Judging from the result of the match at Southampton and the play against Plymouth, Luton are not likely to be so inferior as some would think. Still, there is a long way to go yet. However, the players are very enthusiastic, and the teams that come with the idea of having a soft snip will probably alter their opinions. Frith played a magnificent defensive game on Saturday, and if, as the season goes on, he further improves on his form, as one expects from practice, he will attract considerable notice in the Southern League, particularly if he improves in attack. At present that is, comparatively, quite a small feature of his play.

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Fred Hawkes and Needham played a good hard game, and I should imagine that Elvey silenced his few critics who think that he does not show enough vigour. I have never seen him put more determination into his play. His clearances were absolutely without hesitation and very forceful. He and Robinson made a capital pair, Elvey's placing being slightly the surer of the two. The forward line was good. Simms had hard luck with several good attempts at goal. Wileman was the only forward not up to his usual standard. Roberts was brilliant at times, and the left wing also did very well. Rollinson and Hoar understand one another thoroughly and make pretty play when they get going.