

FOOTBALL.

Luton's Luck.

Portsmouth Found at the Top of their Form.

Two successive victories gave some hope that Luton's visit to Portsmouth might result in at least a division of points, but it was soon evident that the home side were the better team, and indeed on Saturday's form would beat any Southern League Club at Portsmouth. The majority of the team are comparative youngsters, but after considerable experimenting the players have settled down, and if they can be kept together should make a bold bid for honours. With the exception of Warner, who was injured, the Pompey officials are satisfied they had out their strongest combination. In his absence, Potts, late of Hull City, is getting a show, and he will take a bit of shifting if allowed to settle down in the position.

The teams were—

Luton — Mitchell; Elvey and Dunn; F. Hawkes, Frith, and R. Hawkes; Macfarlane, Wileman, Simms, Rollinson, and Roberts.

Portsmouth—Neil; Potts and Probert; Walls, Harwood and Abbott; Thompson, Stringfellow, Buddery, James, and Tattum.

Referee, Mr. F. W. Burton, Ealing.

The result was—

Portsmouth 3 goals.

Luton 1 goal.

Portsmouth are one of the clubs who are reported to be suffering severely from the absence of the regular supporters at the front and on the high seas, but even now they get bigger gates than Luton. It was given out that the takings on Saturday were over £180, and this with the weather outlook far from promising although the rain held off until just after the match. Luton have yet to secure a Southern League victory on this ground, so Saturday's defeat is not altogether surprising, but last season, it will be remembered, they did manage to net the Southern Alliance points.

Although after the opening quarter of an hour there was never any doubt as to the probable result, the game proved a most interesting one, and was at times quite exciting. With the possible exception of goal, the Pompey supporters could claim superiority for their players in every division, but Neil did not get sufficient work to enable a fair comparison to be made with Mitchell. Certainly the Luton goalkeeper could not blame himself for the defeat, as he had really no chance with the three goals which scored. Although as a pair, the home full backs could reasonably be put down superior to Luton, this does not apply individually, for Dunn played by far the best game since coming to Luton. His tackling was always well timed, and he made very few mistakes when he went in for the ball. Indeed, if he had not been right on top of his form it would have been a sorry day for Luton. For the first time this season Elvey was not at all sure either in kicking or tackling, and coming after the many fine shows he has given it was all the more noticeable. Apparently, after making an early slip he became unnerved, and could do little right all through the game. Altogether, it was one of his off days, and after his brilliance this season not likely to be repeated.

The Luton half-back line were over-worked to such an extent they were unable to back up their forwards as they did at the Crystal Palace the previous week, and if Frith is put down as the most successful it was because his well-known powers of defence were fully extended, and he was always well in the picture. As an attacking division, the Luton forwards did not shine; although individually they did good work, they could not get into the same swing as against Crystal Palace. Rollinson was the most effective in making openings, and on the whole the best of the five.

The Pompey backs, it will be gathered, had a much easier task than the Luton pair, but still they are to be congratulated upon their clean kicking. The fact they were never hustled in the same manner as Elvey and Dunn gave them every opportunity of shining in this department. All three of the home half-backs played finely, Harwood, in the centre, proving a most effective stopper, and in addition giving his forwards some nice passes.

But the smartest line was the attack, and as a five they were the cleverest combination Luton have yet run up against in the Southern League. Buddery, who appears to have settled down at centre-forward, opened out the game in fine style, and was not lacking when called upon for a dash through on his own, and the prompt manner he made use of the two openings rather unexpectedly presented to him in front of goal deserve every praise. He was well supported by his inside comrades, Stringfellow and James. The last-mentioned player was secured at a big transfer fee from Middlesbrough last season for the centre position, but his lack of inches prevented him making this position his own, and he seems better suited at inside. Both the home wingers did well, although Tattum was not quite so often in the picture as Thompson, whose many encounters with Dunn were quite a feature of the match.

The opening goal came after ten minutes' play. It was led up to by a fine piece of work by James, which was at first parried, but Stringfellow coming up on the right screwed the ball through from an angle with a fast shot. Up to this point, on the whole Luton had enjoyed quite an equal share of the exchanges, and as a matter of fact had appeared the more likely scorers, but they never recovered from the handicap when Portsmouth went ahead, and were mainly acting on the defensive up to the interval. Therefore, the fact that no further goals were netted up to half-time can be taken as creditable to the Luton defenders, and Dunn in particular. Once or twice the spectators on the popular side were inclined to resent his vigorous tactics, but he had only one or two fouls given against him during the whole game, and really did not deserve all the attention the crowd bestowed upon him, for his tackling was quite legitimate and really clever.

As in the first half, there were a few minutes after change of ends when Luton promised to make a fight for honours, but it was not sustained, and two goals coming within a few minutes of each other about twenty minutes after resumption quite settled matters so far as points were concerned. The first of the two was practically a gift from Elvey, who appeared to have ample time to clear the ball when it was sent in from a free kick just outside the penalty area. But, after stopping the ball, he allowed Buddery to get a surprise shot, the ball hitting

the top of the net just under the bar. In the second case also, Buddery rushed the position when it appeared to be Elvey's ball. Thus it will be seen both goals of this half netted by Portsmouth would have been prevented if Elvey had been in his usual form, and no one would be more sorry than Luton's right back for the slips made.

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With a clear three goals lead, there was a tendency on the part of Portsmouth to slack off, and towards the final Luton forwards came on a trifle, and it was scarcely a surprise when a well-executed movement from the right wing gave Simms his chance, of which he took full advantage, and the margin was reduced by a goal. All the reports give the honour of scoring the goal to Rollinson, who should be known to the Portsmouth scribes at east, but the fact is that Simms was the actual scorer. Although there was little hope of getting even a single point, there was just a chance if Bob Hawkes had netted with a fine drive five minutes before the finish, but Neil just managed to prevent this taking effect, and Luton could not complain at the final score on the actual run of the play for the whole game.