

FOOTBALL.

LUTON v. CROYDON COMMON.

Played at Luton on Saturday. Result:—

Luton 2 goals

Croydon 1 goal

This, the last match in the Southern League at Luton this season, produced a bright and breezy display of football, and, what was most important from the spectators' point of view, the first victory at home since February, when Cardiff City were beaten in the last few minutes of the game. The result was a repetition of what happened on the corresponding day in April last, and, rather curiously, the order of the scoring was also exactly similar.

Neither side was at full strength, but Croydon were far more seriously handicapped than Luton. Leaving out of consideration their men who are in the Army, they were without three regular players—Harkness, Watson and Upex. Watson has been particularly useful this season at outside right, and his inability to play meant transferring Barnfather from the extreme left to the extreme right. Luton's only absentee was Fred Hawkes, who was suffering from a chill. The teams were:—

Luton.—Mitchell; Elvey and Dunn; Wilson, Frith and R. Hawkes; Roberts, Roe, Simms, Rollinson and Hoar.

Croydon: Williamson; Little and Hutchins; Allman, Bushell and Ryder; Barnfather, C. Smith, Goodman, Chester and Dawson.

Referee, Mr. Lilley, Rushden.

Croydon did not live up to their early promise. Their quick forward work in the first ten minutes left Luton out of the picture. Their midfield work was good enough to lead to a couple of goals, but they failed to drive home their advantage through bad shooting. Barnfather certainly ought to have scored when a mistake by Dunn left him in lovely isolation. Mitchell nobly did his part in this period. Actual shots he had few to stop; his part consisted chiefly in coming out of goal and beating the Croydon forwards for possession. He won every time.

Then a change came over the scene. The Luton forwards were fresh and sprightly, whereas the Croydon five had exhausted their first supply of energy. Roberts, Hoar and Simms were particularly merry, and for a quarter of an hour it was certainly Luton's game. Twice goals ought to have accrued from centres by Roberts, Roe on the first occasion sadly disappointing. When a goal did come it developed so quickly that the incident was over almost before one could realise that something important was happening. It was a beautiful, clean-cut piece of football that would have adorned even a classic fixture. Roberts centred quickly; the pace was too great for Simms to get into action; Rollinson attempted to collect but could only slightly deflect the course of the ball. Hoar was the last hope, and Little looked likely to "dead heat" with the winger for possession. Hoar's speed carried him through, however, and, meeting the ball on the run, he drove it home at a terrific pace. This was the only point scored during the opening 45 minutes.

As in the first half, Croydon started the second moiety with great dash, and, assisted by a little luck, this time their efforts were successful within a minute. Following on a corner there was a scramble in the goal mouth. Two or three attempts were made to kick the ball away, only for it to finally rebound nearer to the goal, right to the feet of C. Smith and Goodman. Either could have scored, but Goodman, being nearer, secured the final honour.

Visions of another home defeat loomed on the horizon, especially as all Luton's attempts in the next few minutes were not favoured by the least bit of luck. A lovely header by Rollinson went only inches wide, and on another occasion Rollinson was the victim of tactics inside the penalty area that were very doubtful. If it were a lucky let-off, however, a set off quickly occurred at the other end when Chester was doubtfully bowled over in front of goal. Dunn was particularly vigorous in his methods, and he came in for some advice from the referee. The offence that led to this was well outside the penalty area, however.

Luton's winning goal came about fifteen minutes from the close. Roberts shot in with such speed and precision that Williamson could hope for nothing better than to throw himself forward and divert the course of the ball. He just touched it as he fell and Rollinson was left to shoot into an untenanted net. In the remaining minutes quite the best incident was a lively run and shot by Hoar which well deserved a goal. Luton did find the net once again, but the scorer, Simms, was offside.

Luton largely owed their victory to Mitchell, Elvey and the wing forwards. Mitchell's judgment in running out has already been referred to. To say Elvey's display was polished is a mild way of describing the skill and judgment he revealed. Not one mistake did he make. The halves were good without being prominent. Once more Wilson proved his usefulness. Luton have never had a more conscientious or harder worker than Tommy Wilson. Roberts, Hoar and Simms were most in the picture among the forwards. For Roberts and Hoar it was quite a field day.

Croydon were well served by the goalkeeper and backs, but the halves were only moderate. In midfield the forwards did well; weak shooting was their undoing.