

FROM THE FOOTBALL FIELD.

POINTS ABOUT PLAY AND PLAYERS

BY "VIGILANT."

RUTHERFORD'S GREAT GAME AGAINST PORTSMOUTH.

The soft and pliable condition of playing grounds on Saturday was more favourable for a perfect exposition of football than on any previous Saturday this season, and this makes all the more inexplicable the undoubted fact that from the standpoint of high quality football the game between Luton and Portsmouth was the poorest seen on the Town ground since the Blues' return to the Southern League. Vigour predominated over science, and casualties were much more numerous than goals. It was easily the roughest game seen at Luton this season, and there can be no two opinions that Portsmouth were the aggressors. The referee had a right down busy time endeavouring to heal up sores and issuing cautions to offending players on the visiting side and it says much for his leniency that none of them received marching orders.

Luton finished the game with literally half a team of cripples, and I had the nearest escape I ever want to experience from being included among the casualties. This I cannot lay at the door of any Portsmouth player, for Rutherford was the unwitting cause of what appeared to the crowd as a great joke. Rutherford had had a really great afternoon, and not content with completely bottling up the Portsmouth attack and registering the only goals, he must needs make it warm for the Pressmen, by giving them a taste of his kicking power. Some seasons back, I remember, it was argued with a good deal of warmth as to whether it was possible for anyone to land a ball in the Press box from the playing pitch, and those who argued the angle was an impossible one had a shock a few weeks later when someone did accomplish it. On that occasion it was a mis-kick which swerved and spun in the air, and someone who was on the qui vive had no difficulty in handing the ball out, but in the last minute of Saturday's game Rutherford beat all records. He was out to kick clear at all costs, and his lunge came as straight as a dart for the gallery. I was in the direct line of fire. I ducked by instinct, over my shoulders whizzed the ball smash went the glass in a thousand fragments but behind. It was the most exciting experience we have had in the Press box.

The hard knocks which several of the Luton players met with in their two games in Warr made some doubtful starters, but if all were not quite fit the Blues were able to turn out a full side. Hoar returning vice Grimes. Portsmouth had their amateur captain, A. E. Knight, playing for England, and were also without their regular goalkeeper, Robson. In the latter's place was Newton, the old Croydon Common custodian, who was one of the original members of the Football Battalion, and spent 15 months as a prisoner of war in Germany. This was his first time out for Portsmouth.

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Teams:—

Luton—Summers: Elvey, Dunn; Urwin, Rutherford, Parker; Hoar, Roe, Simms, Williams, Bookman.

Portsmouth—Newton: Probert, Watson; Thompson, Harwood, Turner; Hogg, Spring-fellow, Armstrong, Boddery, James.

Referee, Mr. J. Kelley, London.

Luton were the first to have the benefit of a strong breeze, and it was solely due to the determination of the Portsmouth players not to suffer in silence that the home-ers were not credited with the lead inside three or four minutes. Getting the ball from Simms, Hoar pushed it by Watson, caught it up, and centred into the goalmouth for first Simms and then Williams to try their hand at conversion. Simms was barred, but Williams banged the ball through easily, and the referee pointed to the centre. To those of us in the Press box it was clear the ball was over the line when Hoar centred, but there was hardly time for congratulation upon receiving the benefit of the referee's slip before the Portsmouth players were round the whistle holder like flies round jam. They were so deadly in earnest that he was persuaded to consult the linesman, and as the linesman supported the appeal the decision was reversed, and the goal disallowed.

The force of the wind had a marked effect on the play, and combined with the tendency to roughness early exhibited on the Portsmouth side to bring about the first goal. Twice Williams was badly fouled by Harwood and Thompson. Rutherford was brought up to try his hand with the free kicks. And the second he drove in hard and low from about 25 yards. The goalkeeper had Watson to help him defend the goal, but Rutherford took good care to keep the ball away from the goal-keepers end and try as he would the back could not get his foot to it.

Luton were the more prominent after this success, and Rutherford again got the ball into the net from a corner, but was detected using his hands in the process. Portsmouth a little later had a goal disallowed, James shooting in smartly from an offside position. Apart from these incidents there was little of note in the play. Rutherford and his colleagues literally smothered the Portsmouth forwards, and the Blues had practically all the play, but the visiting defence imparted such an element of roughness into their tactics that unpleasant episodes were of frequent occurrence. Harwood, Thompson and Watson were the principle offenders, and both the two first-named came under the ban of the referee.

A goal kept at the interval was not too surprising against a team of Portsmouth's calibre, but ten minutes after the resumption Rutherford achieved another success. Recovering the ball close to the goal-line Bookman turned quickly and smartly centred. The wind carried the ball back to the halves, and Parker missed it with his head, but Rutherford caught it on the bounce, and drove in from 20 yards a high shot which glanced in from the upright, and left Newton completely helpless. Later on Rutherford shone with a determined effort to force the ball through

from a corner. First the centre half used his head and then his feet, and three attempts brought him to within a yard of the goal, and he was extremely unlucky not to manage the hat trick.

Portsmouth never looked like reproducing effective form against the masterly work of the home halves, and the roughness of their defence again militated against anything like attractive football. Bookman had to be off some time, and even after receiving attention from Trainer Lawson could scarcely raise a gallop or a decent kick. Hoar was not much better, and Parker was quite a lame dog. The cumulative effect of these injuries on the Luton attack was very marked. Result:—

Luton 2, Portsmouth 0.

It was not at all a pleasant game. Portsmouth did not shape like a team with the record they possess, simply because they were mastered from the start by the Blues halves and backs, and they showed something of the spirit of the spoilt child unable to have its own way. Watson and all the halves showed a marked partiality for the man, and often went out of their way to invite scenes, and it is a tribute to the Luton players that although several were badly injured and had a deal of provocation they generally kept their heads, and stuck to their proper function of playing football. It was certainly not their fault that the game was the roughest seen at Luton this season.

Until Bookman and Hoar got in the way the Blues forwards played bright open football, with plenty of resolution and an ahead dash, Williams and Simms being especially in the picture, but the outstanding hero of the game was Rutherford. He now stands level with Simms in the scoring of Southern League goals, and heads the list for all first team matches, but apart from his goal-scoring he played a wonderful game. He was here, there and everywhere, first with his head and then with his feet and the visiting players might well be excused for thinking there were three or four Rutherfords on the field. Urwin and Elvey also played great games, and Parker and Dunn did well until they got "crooked" up.

On Tuesday some of the papers gave the name of Bookman as one of the selections for Ireland against England on Saturday, but his name was missing from the eleven officially published the next day. The explanation is that in consequence of Bradford refusing to release McCandless, an invitation was sent to Bookman, and as Bookman was at the time suffering from knee injuries sustained in Wales the answer sent was that it would be doubtful if he would be fit by Saturday. As a matter of fact, it was uncertain up to the last moment whether he would be able to turn out for Luton on Saturday, and as it was he broke down in the second half.