

FOOTBALL NOTES.

"BLUES" OVER A STIFF HURDLE.

What Portsmouth turned out on Saturday in white shirts I was very disappointed. The last occasion on which I saw "Pompey" was before the grey had crept into my fringe, when they had those gorgeous salmon-pink shirts with claret facings. Just as I admire pretty dresses worn by ladies, so I like pretty football jerseys, and I liked those "pretty wee-kits" of the old Portsmouth club more than any colour I had ever seen, with the exception, perhaps, of the delicate blue and white quarters of Blackburn Rovers. I have worn some different specimens of jerseys in my day, and I was proudest of an orange colour worn with a village club before I had begun to rely on the old sea-pennings, but the salmon-pink of Portsmouth was the last word. I hope that the one-eyed plea for just two colours—white for the home and red for the away team—will never materialise. It would rob us of much of the spice of football, for it would be like playing dominoes with only double-planks and blank ones.

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It was once said to me by one of this school of dullards that any team were white well. I deny that. Although I may have no just claim to the artistic, I always associate white with cleanliness, chastity, and all the virtues. Any spectator who saw last Saturday's game would say that Portsmouth's proper colour would be red—red for danger, for I do not remember seeing a first-class team with so little regard for the virtues of football. I had been told they were a hefty, hustling team, and that the defence stood little on ceremony, hence the fact that they had only dropped eight goals in a dozen games. Now I have no complaint against any Portsmouth players except the middle line. I am quite aware that one or two others forgot themselves in isolated instances, but the three half-backs seemed to have no regard whatever for the rules on dangerous or dirty play, and to be altogether lacking in the instincts of sportsmanship. I put the remainder of the team in the same category as Luton—occasional lapses from fairness, but this intermediate line were out to win by hook AND crook. That the team did not succeed was largely their fault. I leave it at that.

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The game has been pretty fully treated in the "Saturday Telegraph" and the "Tuesday Telegraph," and there is no need to repeat the incidents which made or marred interest. The "Blues" realised that it was a stiff hurdle, and they went all out to win. To keep up the metaphor, it was largely due to the long legs of John Rutherford that they did so. I have almost a frantic desire to see our three middle men played in the inside positions of the forward line. Urwin and Parker are clever dribblers, and Rutherford is an opportunist, and I think that it would be a most interesting experiment if the directors tried them in a reserve match. This is no reflection on the home forwards, who may credit the whim to some abnormal brain wave of a poor scribe. It is there all the same.

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Rutherford takes the palm for Saturday. His goals were excellent, the second being an object lesson in first-time shots. The young man who, coming down Hazelbury-crescent after the game, said it was a lucky goal, may obtain an interview of sixfoot Rutherford any morning at the Town ground between 10 a.m. and 10.30 a.m. It was a glorious goal, and well deserved. If the middle line of Portsmouth was the weakness of their side, the "Blues" middle men were the backbone of their own. Virile in defence, eager and alert in attack, the three had the much vaunted Portsmouth attack shorn of its strength. They did so by playing the ball, and I venture to say that few half-back lines do less charging in the aggregate than the Luton trio. Parker is always interesting, for his brains dictate his policy, while Urwin is a real pocket Hercules, and gets through a prodigious amount of work. Behind them was Elvey's master mind and clever feet, and Dunn, with his swift rushes and big kicking. Except for a few losing hazards in the first half, Jack Dunn played as safe a game as I have seen him give. Summers was his cool, reliable self, and now that he has figured in three consecutive games without losing a goal, I think he will have absolute confidence in his colleagues.

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Forwards are hard to criticise. Some of them are very thin-skinned, and I do not know that Luton's are any exception. I am not going to dwell on the fact that only two of them have yet scored goals. Simms and Williams will get more, without a doubt, and when Arthur Roe opens his account he will get no more than his deserts. If we can keep intact the line as it was on Saturday, and they are allowed to develop the understanding which is now showing more and more in every game, they will put the balance of goals on the right side before Christmas. We want more shooting, and I am not convinced that they get enough ball practice. In danger of Billy Lawson's trusty left, I quote Billy Meredith, the greatest outside-right of this generation, who says: "Some men's idea of training is to give the football player a pair of running pumps and never let him see the ball from the end of one match to the beginning of another. It is all wrong. You cannot have too much ball practice."

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I do not think the criticism can be justly levelled at Billy, but it would be interesting to make the experiment of allowing the Town forwards to get more ball in their training, and see if that helped them in their shooting. That is the department which requires improvement. Simms the thrustful, Williams the worker, Roe the artist, and Bookman and Hoar the speed merchants, should surely be good enough for goals in every game. May the tide turn for them.

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Of the Portsmouth team, I liked the work of Probert and Watson at back. They kicked and tackled strongly. Newton, who was on show for the first time this season, could have done better had he been given more work. The halves showed speed and stamina, and when in the mood, skill. The forwards were fast and had good ideas of combination, but the fact that Rutherford reduced Armstrong to a cipher, affected their play. Stringfellow and Buddery were the pick, and the former showed that, given the opportunity, he knew the whereabouts of the target.

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Two goals to nil was a fair reflex of the Town's victory, and it has lifted them a peg or

two in the table. I hope they will continue
the upward march.

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For the sake of reference I repeat the teams:
Luton Town: Summers; Elvey, Dunn;
Urwin, Rutherford, Parker; Hoar, Roe,
Simms, Williams, Bookman.

Portsmouth: Newton; Probert, Watson;
Thompson, Harwood, Turner; Hogg, String-
fellow, Armstrong, Buddery, James.

Referee: Mr. J. E. Kelley (London).

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