

FROM THE FOOTBALL FIELD.

LUTON'S SURPRISING SET-BACK.

The visit of Crystal Palace to Luton on Saturday provided an unpleasant reminder that the Town Club's vicissitudes are not yet at an end. The success at Northampton justified local hopes of a speedy rise in the Southern League table, but this success was neutralised by a home defeat which left no room for excuses, and demonstrated the fickleness of football form.

The Palace were able to field a full side, including at inside left Barber, who played at left half in his Aston Villa days. Bookman's knee injury necessitated a rest, and in his place the Town introduced Sid Hoar, who was finally demobilised earlier in the week. Appended are the full teams:—

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

Crystal Palace—Alderson; Little, Rhodes; Cracknell, Hughes, Feebary; Bateman, Conner, Smith, Barber, Whibley.

Referee, Mr. J. A. Proctor, Trentham Hall, Staffs.

The depressing influences of a typically cheerless November day rested lightly on 7,000 spectators during a thrilling ding-dong first half. The playing pitch was probably the heaviest going players have had to contend with this season, but they adapted themselves to the conditions, and if their work was not particularly distinguished by artistry it was productive of real bright, go-ahead, dashing football and an abundance of fast moving incident.

The thrills began in the very first minute, when Parker, with a really clever feint, outwitted the Palace halves and favourably placed Hoar for an ideal centre. Simms could not reach the ball, but Tomlinson got there, and his shot at close range gave Alderson no chance. From this point the play was sufficiently open and the forward work sufficiently enterprising for anything to happen any minute, but nevertheless the nature of the equaliser gained by the Palace after five minutes was quite a surprise. Dunn had to evoke the aid of his captain to ward off a dangerous movement by Bateman. Elvey was unhampered, and had ample time to clear, but failed to get a proper grip of the ball, and planted it direct at the feet of Smith about 15 yards out. Smith lost no time in setting it, and a shot at an ideal height landed the ball well out of Summers' reach.

Although the Palace defence was mightily sound, their goal had the narrowest escapes from a terrific free kick by Rutherford, a first time ground shot from Williams and a risky piece of work by Alderson. Running out he shot the ball hard on to Rhodes, and if the rebound had been true nothing could have saved the Palace. The Blues were quite the more prominent in goal-getting attempts, but nevertheless 25 minutes' play found the Palace ahead. Thirty yards out the ball came to Barber, in the centre, and when he let drive at such a range no-one contemplated disaster, ~~terrific as the shot was.~~ There must have been some inexplicable swerve in the flight of the ball for Summers shaped uncomfortably at it from the first, and did not even touch the leather.

This lead the Glaziers maintained up to the interval, but it was frequently in danger. Little was extremely lucky to bar a fine dash through by Tomlinson, and Simms was just as unlucky in missing from a corner. He had no better luck when, from a lovely run by the left wing and a clever centre by Hoar he turned the ball in on the volley, and Alderson just handed over the bar.

During the first quarter of an hour of the second half Luton would have had no more than their deserts if they had equalised. It was only with great difficulty Alderson held on to a shot from Rutherford, and, being rushed before he could clear, he was a trifle lucky to get free kick relief. Tomlinson badly let him off when he caught a centre from Hoar, right in front, and blazed yards wide. Williams tested him well, and Simms also got close, and generally the Palace defence had a harassing time.

A sudden lifting of the bombardment brought disaster which put paid to Luton's chances. Bateman got the ball inside his own half with the Luton halves out of reach and made the most of a clear field. He cleverly worked into the centre and got to within two or three yards of Summers before completing a gem of an individual goal. Inside a couple of minutes he was on the move again, and forced a corner, and although this was headed away Connor fastened on the ball and netted with a first time. This was not the end of the Palace pressure, and Luton never looked like retrieving their fortunes. Result:—

Luton 1. Crystal Palace 4.

While the direct cause of the Palace success was the aptitude of their forwards as sharpshooters, much of the credit was due to the defence for the way they wore down the Blues attack. Except for Alderson, whose risky tactics did not inspire confidence, there was not a noticeable weakness in the defence. The forwards happily suited their game to the condition of the ground, and were a smooth-working go-ahead machine, Bateman, Barber and Smith being the chief sources of danger.

Luton's forwards were right out of the picture as a cohesive force in the last half

hour, but this failure was not entirely theirs. For once the defence failed to realise expectations. Summers was not so clean and certain as usual, both Elvey and Dunn kicked poorly and made many mistakes, and only Parker did himself credit in the half line. Bookman was missed, as Hoar rarely did anything of note, and Roe seemed unable to get going. All three men tried hard and individually did well, but were wild in front of goal.