

DRAW WITH WATFORD.

A DULL GAME.

The Lutonians were called upon on Saturday for the first time this season to take part in the qualifying competition for the English Cup. Their opponents were Watford, and the fixture was to be decided at Luton. These circumstances might have led most people hereabouts to prophesy a fairly easy victory for the locals; but it did not come off. As a matter of fact the home "stripes" were lucky in staving off defeat, and on the play they showed up very badly as compared with the visitors. The weather was not at all favourable, for rain fell almost continuously throughout the afternoon; but there was a rattling good gate, the explanation being that the Watford supporters turned up in their hundreds. Unfortunately the two special trains which conveyed some 1,100 on the North Western were delayed in the Standbridgeford cutting, it being found impossible to get the heavily-laden trains up without the assistance of a second engine. The first train steamed past the field shortly after 3 o'clock and the second appeared 10 minutes later, so that the travellers missed a portion of the game. The start was delayed somewhat, however, so that there was not very much the matter. The worst of it was that Robins (the Watford centre half and captain) was travelling by one of the belated trains. The home side was not by any means at full strength, for Ekins, McInnes and Clarke were all unable to appear. A trial was given to "Gally," Kemplay going to inside right.

The sides were constituted thus:—

Luton: Goal, Perkins; backs, Dow and Williams; half-backs, W. Ford, Sharp, and C. Ford; forwards, Durrant and Kemplay (right), Galbraith (centre), Brock and Hewitt (left).

Watford: Goal, A. G. Baker; backs, Sharp and Cother; half-backs, Wood, F. C. Robins and Marsh; forwards, Hare and Slaughter (right), Beach (centre), McNee and Hill (left).

Referee: Mr. B. M. Lockyer (Referees' Association); linesmen, Messrs. R. Fuller (Luton) and J. Wilson (Watford).

Dow was captain of the home lot and he signalled his elevation by winning the toss. Soon after the start Galbraith was seen to steady himself and send in a long shot which went a bit wide of the mark. The home "stripes" again advanced neatly, but a goal-kick resulted. The Watford forwards played nicely together and when a foul had been awarded against Luton Cother sent the ball wide. A free-kick for a foul against Watford was nicely taken by Williams; but it was not improved upon. Perkins threw away immediately after the arrival of Robins on the scene, while just afterwards Durrant sent in a beautiful cross shot. Galbraith, receiving from Kemplay right in front of goal, shot hard, but the ball was kept out in a marvellous manner which it is beyond the writer to explain. Brock sent in well, though wide, and C. Ford was responsible for a beauty. Hewitt was fouled when close to the Watford goal; Dow took the kick, but managed to send over the bar. The wearers of the gold and black raced away to the Luton end, where a goal-kick was all that was obtained. Off-side spoiled another good effort by the visitors, while in the next minute or two free-kicks were given against the West Herts. combination for fouls on Galbraith and W. Ford. When the game had been in progress something over 20 minutes Durrant got clear and succeeded in beating Baker with a grand shot. Just after the resumption W. Ford was responsible for a long shot which was well saved by the custodian, and the goalkeeper was charged through in the next minute. A foul against the strangers led to a corner. Following this one of the defenders deliberately handled the ball in front of goal. W. Ford was deputed to take the penalty kick, and great was the chagrin of the crowd when the right-half sent the ball spinning high over the cross-bar. It was a bad miss and had an unfortunate influence on the game. Later on Williams headed away splendidly and Perkins gathered the ball up well in dealing with a long shot which travelled along the ground. Following a further corner to Luton Williams dispatched another first-rate shot at the Watford goal. This was productive of a corner only, though most people thought the ball had gone under the bar. Evidently Mr. Lockyer was not of the prevailing opinion, however. Galbraith was the victim of a nasty foul within the 12 yards line; but it was not officially noticed. The corner which was secured was unproductive. When another flag-kick had fallen to the locals, Galbraith put in a first-rate overhead kick and Kemplay only just missed. Ere the interval arrived Watford equalised through the medium of Hare, and when ends were changed the positions were:

LUTON, 1; WATFORD, 1.

In the second half Brock appeared at outside left for Luton, while Hare was in the centre for Watford. Play had been in progress only a couple of minutes or so when Hare put on the second point for the visitors with a shot which it seemed that Perkins ought to have saved easily enough, though it must be remembered that the ball was very slippery. Luton attacked sturdily; but Watford showed very good form and the play later on deteriorated vastly so far as the Lutonians were concerned. Galbraith, indeed, was the only forward who did himself justice, while the defence was far from being as reliable as could have been wished. A couple of corners to Luton were resultless, and later on Perkins saved at the cost of a flag-kick, Dow subsequently presenting another to his opponents. Durrant was unlucky with a good effort, the ball going into the side of the net instead of through. More corners fell to Luton, Robins very nearly scoring from the second, while a like kick was awarded to Luton. The second half was for the most part not remarkable for scientific play. There was a good deal of kick and rush about the display, while weight utilisation was indulged in by both sides. Of course that sort of thing is to be expected in a cup-tie; and as a matter of fact Saturday's game was a typical cup-tie in that regard. As time drew near it began to look as though Luton were in for a licking. But when only a few minutes remained for play Durrant was badly fouled, and the ball was well placed by Dow, one of the Watford men (McNee) assisting it through his own goal. This brought the scores level and it also afforded a good deal of relief to the home supporters. It ought to be said that in the second half there were several unpleasant incidents, at least three of the players being observed to lift their fists at opponents. Happily nothing serious took place, and the referee passed the incidents by with a few words of remonstrance. The display by the Lutonians in the second half was not by any means good. The outcome was that a draw resulted with the following scores:

LUTON, 2; WATFORD, 2.

FOOTBALL FACTS AND FANCIES.

I suppose one would be fairly safe in asserting that none of the Lutonians present at the match on Saturday came prepared for such an outcome as that which was witnessed. It was the worst fiasco that has happened since Luton had to knuckle under to the 'Spurs in the first round some years ago.

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It would have laid a man open to being ridiculed had he ventured to suggest that the club that has secured the divisional championship so often would come near to being beaten by such a team as that of Watford. Yet it happened.

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It is being said that the feelings of disappointment amongst supporters of the Lutonians is almost as pronounced as when the straw-town champions bit the dust before the Polytechnic some seasons since. I can well understand it.

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Having made every allowance for the Watfordians having improved considerably of late years, I could not bring myself seriously to contemplate the possibility of defeat. What happened, however, was that only a slice of luck towards the end of the match prevented the West Herts. men claiming a triumph.

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One scarcely knows whether or not even now they are not justified in crowing. It was a highly meritorious performance to force a draw in a cup-tie away from home, and at the close I held a very wholesome opinion of the visitors.

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At the risk of giving offence I must say that I was profoundly dissatisfied with the way in which the locals shaped. It is true that some of the regular players were absent; but if the lack of two or three men is going to make all this difference we must prepare ourselves for some very unwelcome events.

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Last season we should have laughed aloud at the idea that Watford would be able to run the team closely. It seems that we must school ourselves to thinking that the club is not so formidable as of yore, and it looks as though we shall have to grin and bear some heavy defeats ere the season closes.

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One does not like to be constantly writing in this doleful style; but it would be absurd and dishonest to attempt to argue that the display on Saturday by the locals was anything but poor in the extreme. By comparison the Watfordians played a grand game.

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No doubt the absence of McInnes and Ekins weakened the front rank; but the men who were left have figured well previously, and it is a curious commentary that "Gally," the old warhorse of past seasons, was the best man amongst the forwards.

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The defence was exceedingly rocky at times, and again the halves were guilty of wandering unduly. It may be that we whose business it is to criticise would not have done better; but that is not quite the point, inasmuch as we are not professional footballers. But we do claim to know when the game is properly played.

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If the most biassed of supporters can find it in his heart to say that that was done on Saturday I shall be vastly surprised. Everybody I have spoken to on the subject has agreed that the display was certainly not creditable to the home players.

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The hundreds of Watford sympathisers who made the journey by the North-Western specials were to be pitied, for by a delay *en route* they were prevented from witnessing the opening portion of the play. This was a pity, for it was only then that the locals played in anything like good style.

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Though they were without their centre half for several minutes, the Hertfordshire lot struggled gallantly, and I greatly admired their pluck. They went for all they were worth and managed to keep up their end until the skipper arrived.

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Durrant's opening goal was a beauty. When W. Ford had to take a penalty kick not long after we were anticipating an increase of the score which would almost certainly have rendered the game safe. To the amazement of all—and the unconcealed delight of the Watford contingent—he failed ignominiously.

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When the contestants wound up the first moiety on level terms I was quite prepared to see the strangers gain the advantage subsequently; but I was assuredly not anticipating the extraordinary show which the home lot made.

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The visitors secured the lead very soon after the resumption and they managed to hold it until close upon the finish. Even then it was one of the Watfordians who sent through, so that the home "stripes" are not entitled to congratulate themselves very loudly concerning the point.

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In the second half the visitors' defence was quite a treat to watch, compared with that of their opponents. The one was safe and clever; the other was—well, I will draw a veil and indulge in expressive silence.

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There was a good deal of roughness noticed, while there was also some fist-shaking. I suppose we must expect that sort of thing at a cup-tie; but it is not very pleasant to watch.

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At the end there was a good deal of confidence expressed concerning the probable outcome of the re-play. This comfortable feeling was created by the reflection that the Lutonians could not well play a much worse game. With that verdict we all cordially agreed.

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Though the score was officially stated at two all there is no doubt in my own mind that on one occasion the Watford custodian carried the ball under the bar.

However, the referee did not so decide, and there is no advantage in discussing the point.



The extremely poor form displayed on Saturday is not calculated to make one very confident as to Saturday's prospects. Burslem Port Vale have not been going so strongly since poor Clare's mishap, but they will no doubt be quite powerful enough to account for the Lutonians—provided always that the latter are not at their very best, in which case we may have a pleasant surprise.



Nor am I over-confident as to the chances for Monday at Wellingborough. We could do no better than draw with the Midlanders at Luton, and it is most likely that we shall remain in the very lowly position in the United League that we at present occupy.



By the way, the re-play with Watford rendered it necessary to postpone the United League game with Reading. Judging by the way in which the men of the town of biscuits have been going on lately, we should most likely have come a cropper there.



On Saturday Southampton, playing at home, beat the Arsenal by 5—1. On Monday the United League matches were: Arsenal beat Brighton, at Plumstead, by 5—2; Millwall beat Kettering, at Millwall, by 1—0; Reading beat Rushden, at Rushden, by 2—1.



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The *Athletic News*, writing with reference to the transfer question, says: As to our supposed "sinister designs," so far as Southern clubs are concerned, we fail to understand the imputation. We have neither sought "to injure" nor "to patronise" these organisations. We have too broad a view of the interests of the game to do any such thing. We regard the South as an integral part of the football world, and the North as no more. When Southern critics of a certain school have become less circumscribed in their views they will realise that a football legislator is not necessarily prejudiced because happening to occupy a position at the head of an organisation which, whatever its faults, saved the game from collapse just when it was at its lowest ebb, and hence claims some modest share in making the Southern League possible.

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"Grasshopper" in the same paper writes: "The disasters which have recently befallen Woolwich more than ever shows the value of my suggestion—that the Southern clubs of note should join the Southern League—either as a branch of the League, or remain independent, it matters not. But something will have to be done if clubs like Arsenal and Luton are to maintain their present position. Their expenses are terribly heavy, and with the lessening gates caused by recent disasters it behoves them to look out for themselves. I am very strong on this point, and I am certain that my views are correct."

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Any remarks which must, perforce, be made concerning the display at Watford on Wednesday cannot partake of the congratulatory. The only matter for congratulation was that Luton won. It is true that the margin was not very wide; but the odd goal was ample for all practical purposes.

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The game was one of the worst it has been my lot to witness, and I do not hesitate to express my feeling that it was ruined by the weakness of the referee. Everybody was disgusted by that official's lack of authority and there was a good deal of strong language used at the close.

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The Watfordians commenced fouling early in the game and they should have been at once stringently dealt with, instead of which the men were allowed to do pretty much as they liked. Some of the visitors came in for rough treatment by the home players; but the measures adopted by the whistle holder were of the mildest.

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Judging by what one heard on Wednesday evening in Watford one could not offend a self-respecting Watfordian more grossly than to accuse him of resembling the referee. The exhibition at Luton on Saturday was bad enough; but that of Wednesday was infinitely worse.

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That the visitors managed to win under the circumstances was surprising. They were hustled and harried unduly and more than one fist was raised during the course of the proceedings. That sort of thing ought to have been properly dealt with, and the proper way in my opinion would have been to order one or two of the offenders off the field. It was a disgraceful business.

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What on earth the referee was about when he pulled up McInnes on one occasion for off-side I cannot imagine. It was near goal and "Mac" headed through. Everybody near me—Watford supporters and others—agreed that the "ref" had made a big blunder.

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To crown all, the game was stopped some three or four minutes before it should have been. This naturally annoyed the home spectators and there was a deal of shouting indulged in. To tell the exact truth, I do not think the result would have been affected had the match been played out, for the winners were having the best of it when the whistle blew.

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A worse display than that given before half-time could scarcely have been witnessed. Both teams were tarred with the same brush, and I am not going to make excuses, further than to say that I believe Luton would have done better had the referee been stronger. But they are not to be excused for losing their heads, as they did.

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It must be conceded that there was a distinct improvement in the play of the visitors in the second portion of the game. It was welcome enough in all conscience, for all of us were heartily tired of the play in the first half.

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The conditions also were all against good football. The ball was slippery, and the high wind rendered it difficult to kick accurately, while the methods of the home team were not exactly what might have been expected from them. Still, the fact remains that Luton gave a display which on the whole was wretched, and I am not going to whitewash them.

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In comparing the sides it ought to be said that prior to Wednesday Watford had not been defeated this season. In nearly a dozen matches they had rattled up some 55 goals, and had had only five scored against them. Not so bad for a Southern League second division side.

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One would desire to abstain from mentioning players individually; but a word of commendation ought to be uttered concerning Perkins, who gave a first-rate exhibition in goal. One or two of his saves were simply superb.

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The Luton halves were not at their best, and the forwards were weak. During the whole of the first half there was only one really good sample of combination. The defence was not particularly strong, though it was good enough to prevent the locals from scoring.

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"Linesman" says of Watford: "They are a hard, enthusiastic team, but their keenness led them yesterday to the foulest of foul play. If I say that instances were common—very common—of players holding their fists up to each other and going beyond even that, it will be gauged that the referee had no control over the players. I do not say that Luton were angels without the usual appurtenances, but Watford were certainly the instigators of the rough work, and if the referee had turned Hare off the field in the first quarter of an hour the proceeding might have served a good purpose."

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Here is evidence that the Lutonians were more sinned against than sinning. To sum up, it was a disgraceful exhibition, and I was heartily glad when it was all over.

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In the next round (to be played on November 19) Luton have a very easy task, the draw rendering it necessary for them to entertain Shepherd's Bush or Richmond Association.

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The Burslem team for to-morrow will be:—Birch-enough; Hulme and Spilsbury; Boullemier, Beech and McDonald; R. Evans, Harvey, Simpson, Peake and Heames.

FOOTER.