

LUTON v. WATFORD.

The keenest rivalry always exists between Luton and Watford, and this fact was once more emphasised on the Ivy-road ground on Boxing Day, when quite 10,000 turned up to see the match between these two teams. So great was the crush that admission to the stand had to be closed before the commencement of play.

Luton were at full strength, excepting that Johnson again deputised Stansfield on the wing; Watford had not their usual backs on the field. "Bob" won the toss, and took advantage of a somewhat stiff breeze, but this did not make much difference to the game. The locals got away, and Biggar, the Watford custodian, was early called upon. One from Moody was a stinger, and the visiting goal-keeper got a round of well-deserved cheering for the capable way in which he dealt with it. The Watford men were not given much rope by the Luton halves, and took some time to settle into their game, and even when they did manage to get into the home territory, the Luton backs were much too good for them, and smothered their attempts to put on the finishing touches.

A strong attack by Luton saw Bob Hawkes well placed, and he drove in a very hot shot, which hit the bar and bounded back into safety. Both sides were now putting plenty of energy into their methods, but though plenty of good honest charging was indulged in, the players did not infringe the laws of the game, and fouls were conspicuous by their absence. R. Hawkes was in rare form, and time after time broke up any attempt at combination by the Watford forwards. At last Watford got in a tearaway run, and McKinley put in a good shot, which Platt steered into safety. The game had now taken on quite a Cup-tie air, and wildness marked the play of either side. Still Luton kept a strong upper hand, and, but for the sterling defence of the visiting backs, must have opened up their goal account. By dint of a packed goal space the visitors managed to stave off the Luton attack, and when half time came there was no score.

Re-starting, Luton attacked, but their effort was not sustained, and Watford quickly replied. They, however, found a stumbling block in McCurdy, who cleared. Next Brown and Haycock were prominent for a clever run, but Richardson was equal to checking their progress. Luton attacked again, and at length Haycock obtained an opening and sent in a rattling shot, which skimmed the bar. Brown then forced a corner, which Richardson was chiefly instrumental in clearing. Following upon this. Jones was conspicuous for a creditable effort at goal, sending in a shot which only missed by inches. Hubbard was injured, and the game stopped, but he was able to resume after a rest.

Luton forced a corner, and for some time kept play in front of the Watford goal. Eventually Brown scored with a brilliant shot. After this, play was most exciting, first up and then down the field. Watford forced a corner, which came to nothing, and soon play was transferred, and Luton gained a corner, which Biggar cleared. The home side continued to press vigorously, and Moody was decidedly unlucky in just missing. Play could not be styled uninteresting, and the result was not decided until the whistle blew.

Result: Luton, one goal; Watford, nil.

Biggar was brilliant in goal, and he effected some magnificent saves. Haycock was the most prominent forward on the field; during the whole of what might be described as a Titanic struggle, he was always in evidence. It was Haycock who tested Biggar the most, and the local man had to taste the bitter fruits of hard luck more than once. Menzies missed an easy chance, and Moody still felt the absence of Stansfield. The two home backs, Gregory and McCurdy, played a fine game, particularly in the second half, when the visitors had the wind in their favour.

The only difference between the teams was that perhaps Luton showed the better combination, and they generally pressed home their attack better than the West Herts team; but away in the field, Watford always held their own. They fought a splendid fight, but all the same on the play Luton deserved to win by a bigger margin.

The visitors brought with them three train loads of supporters. One also noticed the large number of ladies on the stand. It may be recalled that last season at Luton Watford drew 1-1, while on their own ground they beat the Blues 2-1.