

LUTON v. WATFORD.

Played at Luton on Boxing Day. Result:—

Luton 1 goal.

Watford nil.

Teams:—

Luton—Platt; McCurdy and Gregory; F. Hawkes, Jones, and R. Hawkes; Brown, Haycock, Menzies, Moody, and Johnson.

Watford—Biggar; Fyfe and Richardson; Palmer, Fayers, and Farrow; Furr, MacLaine, Cleaver, McKinley, and Hubbard.

Referee, Mr. D. S. Moule (West Ham).

The only holiday match at Luton for the first team was a huge success. In the first instance there was a record gate, something like 11,000 persons being present, including hundreds of ladies. Many of them came from Watford, and as there is a certain amount of rivalry between the clubs, there was plenty of shouting, although there was very little singing such as there usually has been at holiday matches.

Perhaps this was due to the coldness of the weather. The people were packed in so tightly, however, that they could not have felt very cold. Besides, there was plenty of excitement. It is true only one goal was scored, but it came sufficiently late in the game to arouse unbounded enthusiasm. Brown, the man who scored, had his hand almost shaken off by his colleagues; hats, sticks, handkerchiefs, muffs and furs were waved, while the people shouted. Yes, they shouted—there could be no doubt about that.

The takings amounted to £286, which is a record for a sixpenny gate. Many people who paid a shilling for admission to the stand and got there a quarter of an hour before the kick-off, could not find seating accommodation. On the large bank at the town end of the ground the people were so close together that once, when Haycock almost scored, the pressure of the people towards the top, on those in front of them, was almost sufficient to break the fence.

Although the game was not a great one, so far as really good football was concerned, there was some excuse for the players, who were influenced to an extent by the excitement engendered by the frequent applause of the spectators. As a consequence, an extra amount of keenness was added to the exchanges, which were very fast, and mostly in favour of Luton.

Whereas the home club was practically at full strength, Watford did not play their usual backs. Fyfe and Richardson, despite the fact that they had to play in unusual positions, acquitted themselves remarkably well, and Biggar in goal was better than ever. His exceptionally strong punches were worthy of Sutcliffe, and he was as successful as that player in dealing with all sorts of shots.

When Biggar took up his position at the town end at the beginning of the second half, he was accorded a very hearty reception, and for another twenty minutes it seemed that this man was fated to stand between the Luton forwards and the success which they so richly deserved. It is true that most of the shots came from a distance, but a very large percentage of them were well directed.

Perseverance gained Luton the victory. They did not merely wait for it, but kept pegging away. The goal was really the outcome of a corner conceded by Richardson. Brown took the kick, and after a short and sharp attack in goal, the ball went to the outside-right, who was some yards away from Biggar. The angle, too, was acute, but Brown sent the sphere crashing into the net, giving Biggar no possible chance.

Then the spectators, or rather those who support the home club, were satisfied. Even the Pressmen, perched up so high and feeling the cold so much, were inclined to take a lenient view of the pressing attentions of anxious directors and others who tried to see as much as possible of the play, and consequently jostled "the recording angels" sitting in front of them.

The game was so crowded with incident and Biggar's saves were so many, that it would be wearying to detail everything that took place. Early in the game Biggar caught a centre by Johnson as Moody was about to head in, and the inside-left was ready to take advantage of any little slip a minute or two later when the custodian just managed to deal with a shot by Haycock.

After Bob Hawkes had driven the ball on to the upright, Brown rushed across the mouth of goal, and being unable to shoot, passed to Johnson, but the outside-left shot wide. Of course Luton did not do all the attacking, and once McCurdy did the right thing in conceding a corner when MacLaine might have scored if he had been allowed to get in his shot.

At the other end Richardson got in the way of a shot by Moody, and narrowly missed putting through his own goal. Then Farrow showed that he was not imbued with the spirit of Christmas, for he fouled Brown so badly that the outside-right felt constrained to tell him plainly what he thought of him. Mr. Moule also came up and spoke to Farrow, with the result that comparative peace was soon restored.

Shortly before the interval Watford obtained two corners, and with a little luck would have attained the success which fell to Luton's lot later on. The first was given by Gregory, and when the ball came across Platt rushed out to punch it. He did not clear, however, and the sphere was banged on to the bar with Platt absolutely helpless so far as saving was concerned. From the second corner Fayers put in a good shot, but it did not meet with the much-hoped-for reward.

Hubbard, who had been playing at outside-left for Watford, was injured early in the second half, but was able to resume after receiving some attention from the trainer. Richardson happened to get in the way of a shot by Menzies, and when Luton came again Haycock sent inches wide; this was the occasion when the crowd at the back of the goal was pressing forward, with the result that those close to the fence did not have a very pleasant time.

After the goal had been scored, Jones took a free kick, and the ball went out to Johnson. Palmer seemed to touch the sphere with his hand, and the spectators called for a penalty, but Mr. Moule allowed play to continue. At the other end Gregory kicked across his own goal, and Hubbard had a chance, but Fred

Hawkes came up just in time to relieve the situation.

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A couple of corners for Watford were of no avail, but in saving the second Platt was pushed hard against the post, and Luton were awarded a free kick. After this, one particularly good centre by Brown gave Menzies an opportunity, but he let the ball go towards Moody, and the chance was lost. In the concluding stages Haycock dribbled the ball well in and shot hard. Biggar dropped the ball in saving and was forced to give a corner, which was cleared.

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It was fitting that the match should be won by a right-wing player, for both Brown and Haycock were in tip-top form, the latter doing a surprising amount of hard work; in fact, he fairly revelled in it. Once or twice Menzies was generous when he might with advantage have improved the shining moment, but once more he kept the forwards together well, and the left-wing men were good enough.

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F. Hawkes, perhaps, was the pick of the halves, but there was not much to choose between them. The backs were again good, while Platt did his little well. It will have been gathered from the foregoing that Luton were value for more than a single goal victory on the run of the play. Their shooting was much better than that of the visitors, who have to thank Biggar more than anyone else for keeping the score within such a respectable margin.