

CHRISTMAS DAY DRAW.

WATFORD DIVIDE THE POINTS AT LUTON.

ANOTHER PLAYER INJURED.

Luton dropped another point at home and lost another player through injuries on Christmas Day, when Watford paid their annual visit. As is usual when these near neighbours meet at holiday times, the "gate" was pooled, and it was easily the best of the season, for though showers and sunshine alternated throughout the day there must have been over eight thousand spectators at the match. Watford have been doing just as well as Luton have done badly of late, and their following appeared to be even larger and more enthusiastic than ever. Colours were extensively worn by supporters of both teams, and there was any amount of enthusiasm in evidence, but precious little occurred in the game to arouse it to the full extent of its capabilities. As a matter of fact, it was a typical Luton-Watford meeting, excelling in vigour and lacking to a corresponding extent in science.

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The Blues had their usual formation in the defence, but the forward line underwent the first changes there have been made for some three or four weeks. One of these changes was, of course, involved by the disablement of Johnson, and Shepherd's recent form in the Reserve team fully entitled him to the centre-forward berth. Stephenson, at outside-right, has also been displaying great promise with the Reserves, and so the Directors decided to give him a trial, Brown being displaced for the first time since he has played with Luton. It was thought the injury sustained by Walker on Saturday would lead to a third change, and Streeton was on the ground in readiness, but Bobbie was able to turn out. The new formation flattered only to deceive. They opened with a brilliant exposition of football, which was hardly adequately rewarded by the scoring of one goal only, but they completely failed to sustain their form against the big, burly set of players Watford have this season. The sodden, miry pitch was all in favour of go-ahead tactics as against the stereotyped order of combined play, and the more the mud was ploughed up the less effective the homesters became.

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Watford had their old defence in Webster between the posts, and Lockett and Stewart at back, Lockett returning to the side to exhibit that top form of his which he invariably manages to bring out against Luton. V. Gregory, Grimsdell and Johnny Blythe, the old Millwall player, made up a half-back line whose stature was all to the disadvantage of the Blues' little set of forwards, and Tattersall, F. Gregory, Dixon, White and Squires, the Redbourn man, constituted a forward line whose chief asset was dash rather than skill. For the first twenty minutes they were in the picture but little. They were almost entirely taken up with defensive work, and in this, though they shone creditably, they were very often outclassed.

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It took Luton only four minutes to open the

scoring, and it was a real gem of a goal they scored. Stansfield took up the running from one of Bob Hawkes' deft passes, and drawing Lockett, centred. Moody snapped up the ball between the backs, and with a characteristic swinging movement bore to the left and drove an unstoppable shot in at the opposite corner. With just a wee bit of luck two or three others would have followed in a few minutes. Stephenson was delighting the spectators with his work on the wing, and backed up by Walker and Fred Hawkes, he frequently had the Watford defence in difficulties. Once from his work, the Watford backs were extremely fortunate to bar a hot shot from Fred Hawkes, and on another occasion, when Shepherd and Moody failed to reach his centre, Stansfield took it and shot hard, only to find Lockett in the way. The best movement of all was one in which the right wing and Shepherd threaded their way clean through the opposition, and Shepherd had Webster well beaten, but unfortunately he also beat the post.

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So far Watford had got dangerous but twice, Tattersall testing Naisby, and Squires sending a real trimmer just over the bar, but just under the half hour they drew level. Resuming from a stoppage near the touch line, the right wing burst through and got the ball into the centre. There was a deal of scrimmaging, in which the homesters were faulty in their attempts to clear, and when shot after shot had failed to get near Naisby, White managed to get one through the crowd which Tommy could not possibly have seen.

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This was all the scoring, but there were plenty of exciting incidents. Seven minutes before the change of ends Stansfield had the opposing defence well beaten with a centre, which left Walker clear. Walker took it on his head with such a flash that Webster could not have had time to take action, and so he stood still and the ball hit him, and he was able to slap it out flat-handed. A minute or two later Tattersall cleverly beat Potts and Bushell at the other end, and worked in from a disadvantageous position to one in which he could test Naisby. But Tommy was equally clever in the way he picked the shot out from the crowd and got clear to throw away.

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There was an amusing incident three or four minutes after the change of ends. Fred Hawkes screwed the ball from a free kick, and Walker went through and placed to Stephenson. Webster dashed out and took the outside-right's centre on the ground, and a nasty-looking scramble ensued against the goal post. So excited did the crowd become that the barrier gave way under their pressure, and when the referee intervened there were two struggling sets—one on either side of the net.

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The Blues did not show up nearly so well in attack this half as formerly. Shepherd, who had had to be attended to in the first half, had to go off three times, and the last time he was carried by Billy Lawson. He was nursing an injured leg, and did not return. Stephenson also lost nearly all his effectiveness, and though Luton continued to enjoy rather the greater share of the game they did not make good use of their opportunities in front of goal. Still it was the Watford goal which experienced nearly all the lucky escapes. Stansfield once worked into the centre, had his shot stopped by one of the backs, and meeting the rebound gave Webster one which nearly proved his undoing. Thrice the visitors were fortunate not to be penalised for fouls in the penalty area, Moody twice being hooked up very deliberately, but their luckiest escape of all was when Stewart kicked clean over a shot from Walker, only to have Webster covering him. Not a yard divided the two players, and it was only after a scrimmage that the ball was got away, but it was a circumstance which proved Watford's salvation.