

Luton's Easter Matches.

Great Victory over League Leaders at Watford.

Given normal conditions, the Easter football programme of the Luton Town Club would have constituted an all-absorbing holiday attraction for thousands of people in the district and, even as it was, it excited enormous interest. It was quite like old times for Luton and Watford to be holiday opponents, and the meetings of the rivals possessed an added interest peculiar to the occasion, in that Watford are making strong running—and indeed, prior to Easter, were hot favourites for the Southern League Championship. Seeing that Watford had not lost a Southern League game since Boxing Day, and had not been beaten at home since the end of November, and that Luton's other holiday game was with Millwall, who won by two clear goals on the occasion of their visit to Luton, and are among the top half-dozen clubs in the table, the Blues were, on paper, up against a very stiff proposition. But they lived up to the remarkable reputation they have gained this season by putting a spoke in Watford's wheel at Camerodan on Good Friday, and following up this success with a draw at New Cross the following day. It was an astounding achievement, and yet no one could feel at all surprised at the results, for Luton will probably finish this season with the most extraordinary record of any of the leading clubs. They have now amassed no fewer than 19 points out of a possible 34 in their away matches, and the only three clubs in the three principal leagues which can claim a better away record is Derby County, the leaders of the Second League. If Luton had shown anything like form in their home matches this season, they would have been in the running for championship honours as well as Watford. As it is they have seriously imperilled Watford's chances, because the Herts. team lost at West Ham on Saturday, and they have a stiff lot of matches ahead of them.

But for the lack of railway facilities there would have been a record exodus from Luton to Watford on Good Friday. The result of the game undoubtedly caused something of a sensation in football circles outside Luton and Watford, but in both the towns most directly affected, the result was pretty much according to expectations. Anyway the five or six hundred Lutonians who found their way over by divers means, were fully confident as to the result, and they would almost have given odds that Luton would win, although Watford were undefeated since Boxing Day, and had not lost a game at home since November. Tradition was in Luton's favour, while the remarkable run of away victories which Luton have set up also pointed to a defeat for the League leaders.

As will be seen from the names set out below, Luton relied upon the side which beat Queen's Park Rangers the previous Saturday, while Watford were able to put out their full strength:—

Luton:—Mitchell; Elvey and Dunn; F. Hawkes, Frith, and R. Hawkes; Roberts, Roe, Simms, Robinson, and Hoar.

Watford:—Williams; Bulling and Stewart; V. Gregory, Kennedy, and F. Gregory; Hastings, Ronald, Edmonds, Green, and Waterall.

Referee, Mr. C. C. Fallowfield, London.

The opening exchanges favoured Watford up to a point, but they never really appeared likely to beat Mitchell, for someone or other got in the way, and the ball was booted up the field. But after ten minutes' play of this nature, Hastings shook off the attentions of Dunn, and swerved the ball into goal from a difficult angle. Mitchell, in attempting to clear, could only knock the ball up, and it struck the inside of the cross-bar, and luckily rebounded clear, and was finally got away. It was just after this incident that Luton's opening goal came along, and Bob Hawkes and Roe must share the credit with Hoar, who was the actual scorer of the point. Bob had wandered a trifle towards the centre of the field, where he secured the ball, and he cleverly pushed it through to Roe, who took it well towards the goal-line, and then swerved it back in front of goal, giving Rollinson what seemed a gold-edged chance, but the Luton inside-left failed to gather the ball as it came across. Apparently the opportunity had fled, but it was not so, for Hoar was in close attendance, and sent the ball flying high up in the rigging before Williams could get back into position, after advancing towards the right wing attack. At first it had seemed that Roe was likely to try a shot, and the pass across the goal-mouth quite upset the calculations of the Watford defence. If Hoar had been a yard or so closer in, the ball would probably have gone clean over the bar, for it was rising every yard, and only just got under the bar. Naturally the delighted Lutonians let themselves go at this success, but they got rather a severe shock just after, when Dunn, in attempting to clear, lifted the ball almost into the Luton goal, for it would have caused Mitchell some trouble if the ball had dropped a yard or so sooner instead of on the net itself. Anyway it was a let off for Luton.

Having taken the lead, however, Luton were showing much better methods of attack than earlier, Hoar and Rollinson in particular giving the home defenders something to think about by their dashing tactics. But a breakaway on the part of Hastings brought disaster, although as a matter of fact it was a palpable mistake on the part of the referee which gave Watford their chance. The Watford winger was going well forward, when Dunn dashed back after him, and in attempting to get at the ball, sent Hastings flying into the fatal area. Without any doubt whatever the spot where the two players came into contact was a close two yards on the safer side of the penalty area, but the direction both were travelling sent them forward, and both actually landed inside the fatal line when they fell. The referee appeared to have no doubt on this point, and consulted the linesman on the stand side, with the result that Watford were awarded a penalty kick, which Kennedy took, and with a low drive sent the ball into the far corner of the net. Thus Luton had a distinct grievance when they found themselves once more level with their opponents.

Smarting from a sense of injustice, Luton went straight away from the restart, and Hoar, with a

clever feint, got the better of Stewart, and planted the ball nicely to Simms, who promptly gave his side the lead again. This was followed up by Roe forcing a corner which, however, was badly placed by Roberts. Ten minutes before half-time Simms was going through for a certain goal, when he was badly grazed, but the free-kick came to nothing, although it was a near thing. Bob Hawkes sent in a sharp shot from the place-kick, which Williams could do no better than just push away to Roberts, but the Luton winger sent behind from what should have been a scoring position. Just on half time Roberts sent in the hardest drive of the match, and Williams was deservedly cheered for a brilliant save.

Half-time: Luton 2, Watford 1.

The first incident of note in the second half was a corner for Luton, which came to nothing, and then a foul on Simms following a left-wing attack spoilt a fine chance, but once more the danger was cleared. However, after ten minutes' play in this half, Rollinson burst through in great style, and centring like an extreme winger, gave the ball to Simms, who rushed it into the net, giving Luton a comfortable lead of two goals. Realising it was now an uphill fight, Watford warmed to their work, and played stronger than at any period of the game, with the result that Mitchell did well to save a shot from Ronald, after a corner had been given away by Dunn. Midway through, Ronald reduced the lead from a surprising centre put across from Waterall. Dunn appeared to have cleared the original danger with a tall kick, but the wind just kept the ball in play, and Waterall pounced on his unexpected opportunity, finally sending the ball over to Ronald with a forward centre.

For a time Watford seemed likely to make a real fight for honours, and it took the full energies of the whole Luton defensive strength to hold them at bay. Fortunately, however, they succeeded in doing this, and then five minutes from time the result was put beyond doubt by a remarkable goal scored by Roberts. Roberts and his partner were noticed to be well through, and Williams being unsupported by either of his backs, came out to the edge of the penalty area, in an attempt to clear, but Roberts lifted the ball over his head, and after bouncing on the ground, it rolled slowly into the net, with all the players, Williams included, calmly looking on without being able to do anything to prevent the goal. Luton were quite content with their lead, and laid themselves out to just play time out, which they ultimately succeeded in doing without further scoring taking place.

Result: Luton 4, Watford 2.

Luton fully deserved the points, although there were times when the result hung in the balance, particularly just after the Watford second goal was scored. Their forwards were far more dangerous than Watford's all through the game. The "star" performer was Hoar, who has never been seen to better advantage in a Southern League game. He was altogether too clever for Bulling, and his centres were always dangerous. Simma was a trifle unlucky not to accomplish the "hat trick" for the second match in succession, for he was a certain scorer when he was brought down so badly as mentioned above. Roe and Rollinson each played up to their partners in fine style, and the whole line pleased the Lutonians present. When Luton visited Watford in February last, Bob and Fred Hawkes were rather unkindly criticised by the local press, and they were probably anxious to prove the critic was at fault, for both played a good, hard game, with Bob almost at his best. Frith also did finely in defence, while, further behind, the backs and Mitchell quite maintained their reputation.

Watford did not play like a championship team, their backs in particular being very moderate. At times, Hastings and Ronald were seen to advantage with some skilful football, but Edmonds was usually crowded out by Frith, and Waterall only got dangerous at long intervals.

The gates with Watford are pooled, and taking everything into account, it was a remarkable financial result, for the takings actually worked out at £291 15s., nearly double any other gate at Watford this season. But no club can draw like Luton at Watford, and they easily hold the record for the ground, namely £320 taken on a Good Friday about five years ago. This figure would have been given the go-by on Good Friday if Lutonians could have got over as usual by train, for there was tremendous interest this year, on account of the remarkable position occupied by Watford at the head of the table.