

WILLIAMS, THE WONDER MAN.

WATFORD'S LUCKY ESCAPE AT LUTON.

POINTS SHARED.

(By CRUSADER).

LUTON TOWN Nil
WATFORD Nil

LUTON. — Gibbon; Anderson, Till; Walker, Jennings, Millar; Hoar, Green, Kerr, Butcher, Hoten.

WATFORD. — Williams; Horsman, Johnson; Toone, Poole, Carter; Stephenson, Smith, Mummery, White, Foxall.

Referee: Mr. R. R. Crump, London.

For the first time since the war Luton Town supporters were entitled on Saturday to say that there was no doubt whatever that their favourites were a much better football team than Watford. In each of the eight League games that had previously taken place, whatever the result, the play had either been even or in favour of Watford. On Saturday, however, Luton were unquestionably superior as a football side, had quite seventy-five per cent. of the play, and would have been fully entitled to the booty could they have scored a goal. Watford's defence had the most gruelling time it has endured this season, and probably for seasons before. It is quite certain that the Luton forwards have never so thoroughly outpaced and outmanoeuvred the Watford halves and backs as in this struggle, but there was one man they could not outwit—Reginald Williams. He has done some extraordinary things against the Luton forwards, but in this match he eclipsed all previous records, and, admitting that he was more than a little fortunate on many occasions, his exhibition stamped him as a master of the game. Giving Horsman and Johnson the full meed of credit that is their due, Williams deserves

THE MAIN VOLUME

of praise for Watford's partial success.

It was inevitable that there should be any amount of keenness and vigour. None can recall a match between the two clubs when the finer points were the more conspicuous. But beyond one or two minor ebullitions the game was clean and contested in a good-natured manner. Early on I thought that Toone's tactics were going to be a spoiling factor, especially as Hoten is not the player to take things lying down, but they settled down, and there was very little to complain about. Indeed, the most unsatisfactory feature from the crowd's standpoint was the mediocrity of the officials, and it is a long time since officials were so thoroughly criticised in so clean a game. Mr. Crump lacks personality, and he lacks pace, and he was several times out of view of the ball, or must have given a couple of penalties. The linesmen also came in for derision, and one frequently made errors either from poor eyesight or from lack of knowledge of the rules, because as soon as the ball touched the line he waved his flag, and one veteran referee came up to the Press-box and pointed this out, declaring that the ball had several times been flagged out of play when it had not crossed the mark.

When all these factors have been considered, however, there can be no question whatever as to the run of the play and the merits of the teams. When Jennings won the toss and took what appeared to be a decided advantage of the breeze it was generally felt that Luton would have to make the issue safe in the first half if they were to put an end to Watford's long series of successes. The first half was uneven and patchy, but always interesting. Luton had much the better of the exchanges, but whenever Watford got away they were dangerous, and there were scenes in Gibbon's household just as exciting as those that took place in Williams' locality, but they were not so frequent. On two occasions Williams was well beaten by shots, but Horsman and Johnson had fallen to the rear and kicked the ball away when all seemed lost. Indeed, it appeared to me that Johnson was well over the line when he

SCOOPED THE BALL OUT,

but the referee was hardly in a position to judge correctly, and he rightly gave Watford the benefit of the doubt. Green was roughly brought down by Johnson, and there were loud appeals for a penalty, but these were ignored. The Town forwards were playing remarkably well, but the best feature of the game was the splendid defensive work of the Watford backs, who were shrewd in judgment and neither gave nor asked quarter.

When the teams crossed over most of us thought that the time had come for the testing of the Town's defence. Poole and Smith changed places, but why they should have done so was difficult to understand. Poole had played well, and Smith had by no means done badly. The change seemed to promise reward very quickly, for a determined attack by Watford was only beaten off by strenuous work in which Jennings and his backs were conspicuous. Then began the Town's fastest and finest work of this season. They maintained almost without

cessation a fierce attack on the Watford goal. Quite early in it Horsman tapped the ball with his hand, and there was one great chorus of "Penalty!" The referee was not in a position to see, but he stopped the game and walked over to consult the linesman who had a perfect view of the incident if he were following play. When he gave his decision against the Town, there was

A FIERCE OUTBURST

of anger, for even if the position were not exactly dangerous, the breach of the law was plainly evident, and the only excuse that I can conjure up is that the official was not following the game at the moment. But the grand assault increased in its intensity, and the Watford goal was bombarded. The visiting halves seemed incapable of holding up the Town forwards, and in spite of the desperate resistance by Horsman and Johnson the ball was almost continuously in the Watford penalty area. Time after time it seemed as if the goal must fall, but Williams rose to the occasion, and saved magnificently. Many chances were missed, but splendid shots were parried and cleared in quick succession. Once more Butcher had shocking luck when he saw Johnson kick off the line with Williams well beaten. Hoten once got in a terrific shot that struck Williams on the body, and then the keeper had to plunge to the feet of Kerr and Butcher to get the ball behind for a corner. He had to receive attention before the flag-kick was taken, for the shot from Hoten had hurt badly. When the heavy rain swept the field the attack faltered a little, but it was renewed very soon, and Williams' charge bore a charmed existence. Watford made one or two dangerous raids, and might have got a goal had they been steadier in front of goal, but the closing stages were still in favour of the Town, who were unfortunate not to take both points. Williams was

THE BIG MAN

of the day, and the above does not give a word of praise that he did not deserve. His backs were splendid, and Fred Gregory could not have improved upon their work. Watford's weakness was at



W. Carter (Watford)

half-back. Carter and Toone were very useful, but as a line they were not nearly so good as what we expect from Watford. They failed to hold the Town forwards, and they were almost useless to their own vanguard. The forwards showed that they could do well if they were properly assisted. Mummery started in virile fashion, but was seldom dangerous after the first half hour. White was as cunning as ever, but saw too little of the ball. When he got it he made Foxall play. Smith did fairly well in the first half, but Stephenson found Till a rare obstacle, and had not a happy day. The Town team played well in every department except in front of goal. There they had enough chances to have won with ease, and although they shot well at times, there was lacking the coolness that would assuredly have brought success. Gibbon had one or two good shots to stop, but generally Anderson and Till dealt satisfactorily with all that the middle men left for them to do. Both played finely, and made few errors even when the ground was like

A SKATING RINK,

and wind and rain beat in their faces. Anderson came nearer than ever to equality with the grand little Till. The half-back line was sound in defence, and their work was reflected in the continuous attacks of the Town. Jennings found serious challenge to his heftiness in the early stages, but he soon brought out that little bit extra that put him right on top. Millar countered the elusive Stephenson most effectively, and has not played better, while Walker, after he got accustomed to Foxall, was usually too smart. All the forwards did well, and it would be unfair to individualise, perhaps, but one cannot refrain from giving Green a special word. The heavy ground was to his liking, but his ball control, his virility, and his opportunism marked him as a hundred per cent. better man than he was six weeks ago. Hoar and Hoten were fast, and while the former muddled grandly, the latter's cutting in was always dangerous. Butcher was as brainy as ever, and initiated many attacks, and Kerr led the line well, but seems to have lost his shooting boots.

There were 9,500 spectators.