

UNHAPPY HOLIDAYS.

LUTON TOWN IN THE DUMPS.

One Point Out of Six.

(By "CRUSADER.")

At Watford on Christmas Day.

WATFORD 1 goal
LUTON TOWN 1 "

WATFORD. — Williams; Slade, Prior; Smith, Strain, Carter; Stephenson, Poole, Pagnam, Bell, Andrews.

LUTON. — Brookes; Anderson, Graham; Mills, Jennings, Millar; Mackey, Butcher, Tricker, Reid, Dennis.

Referee: Mr. R. G. Rudd, London.

Scorers: Poulton for Watford.

Reid for Luton.

At Luton on Boxing Day.

WATFORD 3 goals
LUTON TOWN nil

LUTON. — Brookes; Anderson, Graham; Mills, Walker, Millar; Mackey, Butcher, Kerr, Reid, Dennis.

WATFORD. — Williams; Slade, Prior; Smith, Strain, Carter; Stephenson, Bell, Pagnam, Andrews, White.

Referee: Mr. R. G. Rudd, London.

Scorers: Andrews (2), Pagnam.

At Gillingham on Saturday:—

GILLINGHAM 4 goals
LUTON TOWN 1 goal

GILLINGHAM. — Fox; Robertson, Hendrie, Jones, Rutherford, Cook; Chance, Marshall, Brown, Ramsell, Berry.

LUTON.—Brookes; Anderson, Till; Mills, Walker, Millar; Mackey, Butcher, Kerr, Reid, Dennis.

Referee: Captain A. Prince-Cox, Barnes.

Scorers: Marshall, Ramsell (2), Chance for Gillingham; Reid for Luton.

Whatever changes are made in the Town team on Saturday will be justified, if only from the point of view of continuing the search for a winning team. The holiday games have shown up in glaring fashion many weaknesses, and it is obvious that the directors must ransack the whole of the resources at their command if the position on the League table is to be improved. For the players one can have a good deal of sympathy. They have all done their best, undoubtedly, and some of them have suffered injury and have never recovered confidence. In the main, however, there has been a lack of balance and blend, and, more than anything else, an absence of good marksmanship. There is at the moment very serious danger of finishing in one of the two lowest positions on the table. At this period last year the Town occupied the fifth position on the League table, but now they are virtually third from the wooden spoon.

In what direction can the directors look for improvement? Everywhere. It is useless to be satisfied with any position, and there should be a constant search for new blood. It has been alleged, perhaps with some truth, that the directors are too sentimental at the end of the season in that they retain players who have fulfilled their period of usefulness. It is an allegation that will hardly bear inspection. The retentions from last season, none from any season for that matter, did not meet with unanimous approval, but the deterioration of the club is not attributable thereto only in small part. The high hopes that were entertained from the new players have not been fulfilled, and it has been nothing short of remarkable that players who made good reputations have not realised their best at Luton. Then must also be borne in mind that injuries have played no small part in the shuffling and re-shuffling of the team.

We have good players, and the bright feature is that many of them are young, improving rapidly, and should form the nucleus of a sound team a couple of seasons hence if the club can afford to keep them. It is noteworthy that the young men, among whom I include Anderson, Graham, Davies, Neal, Mills, Shankly, Reid, cost the club nothing. There are other players, of course, who have many years of football before them, but I do not include them in the list of young men because they have had a good deal of experience. I maintain, however, that a good coach, apart altogether from the trainer or the management, could do much for these, and under the guidance of men like Bob Hawkes, Fred Hawkes, John M. Dow, Bert Moody, and A. Durrant, for the respective departments necessary, these could be taught a great deal if they were amenable to discipline as I am sure they would be.

The outlook for the Cup-tie at Weathersfield on Saturday week is very

...may indeed. With Jennings so badly injured at Watford on Christmas Day the team has lost a stiffening it could not afford. Last season he was injured on Christmas Day, and he was played—perhaps against the better judgment of the management—at Highbury with ill results. I hope there will be no error of that kind this season. His physique and ardour are required by the team, but it is no good playing a man that is not thoroughly fit, and I do not think he has much chance of recovering in time for play. A gash some six inches long under the knee had to be stitched at Watford Hospital, and, although making a good recovery, the Town captain will have to be content to stand and watch. Another casualty was Walker, who went to Gillingham in spite of a severe cold, and he has been very ill in bed during the week. It was to be expected that someone would take cold from the foul weather in which the match at Gillingham was played.

At Watford the Town deserved to win. They played the better football although reduced to ten men, and Williams has more to do than Brookes. Had Jennings not suffered injury at the end of nine minutes, I feel certain the Town would have got both points. All the men played well, but Mills was a surprise packet in centre half. Tricker made his debut with the first team. He showed splendid knowledge of the game, and under better conditions he will play better.

At Luton on Boxing Day the Town suffered their first home defeat of the season. They had quite as much of the play as Watford, except in the all-important matter of goal-scoring. The visitors got a lucky goal on the stroke of half-time, and two more in the second half.

The attendance was the best of the season—upwards of 13,000.

At Gillingham on Saturday the weather was the worst experienced by the Town team since the war. The Town again had a good share of the general play, but failed in front of goal, several chances being missed. Gillingham kept the ball on the ground better than the Town, and that was the main factor in their success. They got a couple of goals early, but Reid got a grand goal, and after the interval Gillingham got through twice without response.

Brookes was not to blame for any goals scored against him in any of the games. The backs were not as sound as usual, and although that was to be expected, perhaps, with grounds in such terrible condition, the fact remains that mistakes gave the opposing sides goals, in two or three instances owing to lack of understanding between backs and goalkeeper. Nevertheless, it came as a surprise when Graham was dropped from the first team on Saturday. The halves seemed to suffer a lot through the accident to Jennings. Both Mills and Millar were disposed to leave the opposing wingers unattended on Friday and Saturday, although they worked tremendously hard all the time. Walker was suffering from a severe cold and was weak on Friday, but did a grand deal better at Gillingham.

Among the forwards Tricker's debut at Watford was successful, and if he can do in the Town games a tithe of what he has done for the Middlesex League, he will help to get Luton out of the rut. On Friday he played for his League team and scored five goals against Ipswich. Tom Reid has done very well, and seems to have secured his position. He needs to be a little quicker in gathering and getting, but his shooting is good, and he is learning how to get the best out of Den Kerr has had no luck at all in the second half of the season, and does not seem so confident as he was last year. But he did splendid work at Watford, but was injured in that game and played with difficulties on the succeeding days, but was a "goer" from start to finish. Mackay's best was seen at Watford, too, and he is more than useful, but in the following two games he did not reach that standard.

There were several players called in to visit Gillingham who would have been rested owing to injuries at any other period.

HOPES UNFULFILLED.



LUTON TOWN: "WELL, WHAT A CHRISTMAS; ONE POINT INSTEAD OF SIX IS ENOUGH TO BREAK A FELLOW'S FAITH IN SANTA CLAUS!"

CRUSHED AGAIN.

Crippled Players at Gillingham.

FOUR GOALS LOST.

(By "CRUSADER.")

GILLINGHAM 4 goals
LUTON TOWN 1 goal

GILLINGHAM.—Fox; Robertson, Hendrie; Jones, Rutherford, Cook; Chance, Marshall, Brown, Ramsell, Berry.

LUTON.—Brookes; Anderson, Till; Mills, Walker, Millar; Mackey, Butcher, Kerr, Reid, Dennis.

Referee.—Captain A. Prince-Cox, Barnes.

A weary, dispirited, and, in two or three cases, limping company left Luton on Saturday morning for Gillingham. The weather was bad enough at Luton, but when we got to town it was growing worse, and by the time we reached the Gillingham ground, about half-past one, when there was not a spectator to be seen, we were wet and chilled almost to the bone. The dressing room was cold, and the wind swept through the corridors under the stand, driving rain and sleet that was bitterly cold, and we were glad of all the shelter we could get. Practically every player was nursing bruises, and several had more or less severe sprains. Butcher, Dennis, Millar and Reid were all wearing a limp, and Walker had suffered a cold. The ground was in a terrible condition, and it was doubtful whether the game would be played. The Gillingham officials and players would not have been sorry had the referee ordered a postponement, for they were due to re-play their Cup-tie to-day, and in the week they had already played three hard games before they turned out to meet the Town. However, the referee was decisive enough, although he turned out well protected against the elements. Play had not been in progress long before the ball was very heavy, and not a few of the players had severe headaches long before the end. A good charge would send a man

SKIDDING FULL LENGTH

for yards, and Mills once travelled on his face and stomach some five or six yards, almost into touch. On the run of the game there was very little to choose between the teams, for Luton were as often in the vicinity of Fox as were Gillingham near Brookes, and their constructive work was quite as good. Where they failed was in the finishing, and had they been leading at the interval it would not have been any surprise to the spectators. On the contrary, Gillingham were very warm in their final efforts, kept their heads better, and so gave Brookes no chance to save any of the goals that were registered.

The first goal came quite unexpectedly. The ball had been held on the Town right wing, and it was slung into the middle. And from there to Chance. He got in a centre which was sent out, but MARSHALL got possession and dribbled through to beat Brookes. The Town maintained the attack for several minutes after this, but more good work by Chance enabled him to centre, and after the Town defenders had vainly tried to kick the ball out of the sludge, RAMSELL got hold and beat Brookes for the second time. Again the Town attacked hotly, and but for the hefty Robertson's strenuous work they would have been through, Dennis especially doing well. It was following

one of his fine runs that Reid reduced the arrears with a magnificent drive. Dennis' centre had been blocked, and the ball came well out. REID, who was lying well back, came at a run. Although Fox touched the ball, he had no chance of stopping it, and the crowd

CHEERED TO THE ECHO

Reid's splendid effort. Soon afterwards the Town forwards missed a chance of equalising. Dennis again went through, and it appeared a certain goal, but the Town inside forwards could not tap the ball past Fox, and he eventually got it away for a corner, which was fruitless. There were more chances before the interval, which came with the score:

GILLINGHAM 2 goals
LUTON TOWN 1 goal

The second half found the Town quite as good as the home team when play was in mid-field, and many times the ball was put across the home goal-mouth, but only Reid seemed able to do any shooting from the penalty area. Mackey and Butcher had fine efforts saved by Fox, but there was not enough target practice. At the other end, Gillingham were more fortunate. Marshall ran through, and after his shot had been repelled RAMSELL registered from close quarters, and just before the end Brown, who was well offside, got through and passed to Berry. Brookes, by a great effort, diverted the shot to the post, and it rebounded for CHANCE to score an easy goal, the game ending as stated.

Gillingham were more at home in face of distressing conditions. They kept the ball down better than did the Town, and they were quicker in front of goal. There was little difference between the teams except in the matter of goal-scoring, but the Gillingham wingers were again allowed a lot of latitude. Brookes was blameless, and the work thrown upon the backs was too much for them. Till played as well as ever he has done, and he kept his feet exceptionally well. Anderson was not so fortunate, but he stood up to the rushes of the home forwards as pluckily as ever, and he had

NO MEAN TASK.

The halves were leg-weary in the second half. Walker improved considerably upon his game against Watford, and for an hour he was often in the picture, and Brown did not shine. Mills and Millar were stubborn, but wandered into the middle too much. Reid was as good as any forward on the field, and Dennis, in spite of his limp, did many good things. Kerr was well watched by Rutherford, who concentrated on defence, and Butcher's lameness was more pronounced in the second half, so Mackey did not get a lot of work.

For the home side, Robertson, Rutherford, Jones, Chance and Marshall were the best. Marshall, who came to Luton as a half-back and won much praise by his skill, is turning out a fine forward, and he was instrumental in working up most of the home attacks.

There were not many more than a thousand present, and the receipts did not realise £100.