

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, nor 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 it 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 these young men, among whom I include Anderson, Graham, Davies, Neal, Millar, 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. F. Durrant, for the respective departments if 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 West Bromwich on Saturday week is very gloomy indeed. With Jennings so badly injured at Watford on Christmas Day the team has lost a stiffening it could ill 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 to 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 had 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 at 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 goal 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 both worked tremendously hard all the time. Walker was suffering from a severe cold and was weak on Friday, but did a great 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 and scored five goals against Ipswich Town. Reid has done very well, and seems to have secured his position. He needs to be a little quicker in gathering and get-off, but his shooting is good, and he is learning how to get the best out of Dennis. Kerr has had no luck at all in the first half of the season, and does not seem so confident as he was last year. Butcher did splendid work at Watford, but was injured in that game and played under difficulties on the succeeding days, but was a "goer" from start to finish. Mackey's best was seen at Watford, too, and he was more than useful, but in the following two games he did not reach that standard.

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