

"WILLIAMS' LUCK."

WATFORD'S MAIN ADVANTAGE OVER LUTON.

TOWN TEAM GO DOWN.

(By "CRUSADER.")

WATFORD 2 goals
LUTON TOWN Nil

WATFORD.—Williams; Slade, Gregory; F. Smith, E. Smith, Strain; Stephenson, C. J. Foster, Papworth, Swan, Mummery.

LUTON.—Mingay; Anderson, Graham; Walker, Jennings, Millar; Moffat, Shankly, Thompson, Reid, Dennis.

Referee.—Mr. G. T. Gould, London.

There was a strange sort of quiet about the Watford spectators after the game on Saturday. Usually there is any amount of badinage and teasing, but the most partial of them was fain to admit that the home team had been blessed by even more than their usual run of luck, which has been considerable in their meetings with Luton since the war. "Williams' luck" is becoming quite proverbial among the Luton followers, and it is really extraordinary how the Watford goalkeeper manages to put up his very best displays against the Town, and how his mistakes are redeemed either by the incompetence of his opponents or the help of his colleagues.

It is a change to find practically every critic in agreement that the Town were unlucky to lose. "At least a point" was the general view of their deserts of the Town, and yet they did not rise to anything like the same degree as at Bournemouth, when they effected a draw.

The Town were a long time settling down, the reason being that they do not quickly get accustomed to the wide ground, and then there was a lot of rough grass on the Watford pitch, and this bothered them more than a little. There were thrills at the Luton goal long before Williams was called into action, and Mingay was in fine form. Two or three times he went out and took the ball from the toes of the opposition, and he was always safe when the ball came from any distance. When the Town forwards began to wake up and swing the ball about Williams showed of his best. He made some very fine saves, and proved conclusively that Harry Fryer will not get his chance in the Watford goal while the veteran retains this form. He was exceedingly fortunate once when the ball was shot in by Reid during a scrimmage, for Thompson should have let the ball go instead of trying to stop it and shoot through himself. This was an error that was partly responsible for the loss of the game, for a goal to the Town at this stage would have made a big difference.

It was a keen struggle right to the interval, when there was a feeling of satisfaction among the Luton section of the crowd and of unrest among the Watford portion.

The second half began with the home team successful almost immediately. Their goal came about as the result of a series of attempts by Town defenders to outwit attackers. Millar tried it and lost the ball to Stephenson, but there was no sudden danger from that. When the ball came across the field, however, Walker failed to get the better of Mummery, and the latter tapped the ball into the goal-mouth. There were too many defenders in a heap, and had the backs concentrated on protecting the goalkeeper there would have been no score, but it appeared to be nobody's ball, and SWAN is too experienced a player to allow such an opportunity to skip. He just hopped in and turned the ball past Mingay, and so gave the home team the lead.

For the next half hour the Town had the better of the game. Over and over again they beat back the home defenders, and Williams made many splendid saves. In addition, the Town's shooting was very erratic. Thompson especially sinning, and Reid and Shankly had very hard luck with good efforts. The narrowest escape, however, came when Dennis robbed the goalkeeper, who had run out, and the ball appeared certain to go into the vacant goal, but Slade managed to scramble into goal and kick away. It was a hard fight, and Watford, who owed a lot to the enterprise of Stephenson, made frequent raids, only to find Mingay very safe. Two minutes from the end, however, Walker miskicked and let in Mummery, and he went alone to centre to FOSTER, who scored with a beautiful first-time shot, and the game was won.

If it could be said that the Town were let down in a game where they had the better of the run of the play, the deficiency was chiefly in the middle line. In the three previous games this had been the Town's strength, but not one of the three came up to his general standard at Watford. They were triers as usual, hard-working, without meeting with the success they have shown in previous games. It is not for me to blame Walker for the goals. It should be clear to followers of the game by now that more goals are coming as a result of the new rule, and the sooner they get accustomed to this without being hard on defenders, the better. If the right half were infinitely responsible, others should have averted the danger. More than once he covered the faults of others, and he was no worse, if no better, than his colleagues in the middle line.

The backs played well on the whole. In the early stages the dribbling propensity of Anderson gave cause, but in the second half, especially in the last half hour, he gave a display that elicited anything he has done in previous games this season. There has been a quiet but persistent demand for a change at right back owing to this fault, but I am bound to say that if Anderson's future play is to be as good as it was in the second half at Watford, then it will require someone on the international mark to move him. Always a footballer in the best sense of the term, the new rule has not helped a defender of his stamp. Graham's success has been due to the fact that he was the long boot to good purpose, and Watford's pair did the same on Saturday. There was no dilly-dally at all. They just thumped the ball as hard as they could, with the result that their forwards usually found it and a clear course for goal.

Anderson seemed to realise this, and his kicking from all sorts of positions was beautifully timed and of good length. At this stage he outshone Graham and the pair at the other end, well as they had played. Graham played in the same thorough fashion all through the piece, and the more we see of him the better we like him.

Mingay proved again that he is a first-class man. His judgment in covering the man in possession when close in averted a goal on two or three occasions, and he was in no way to blame for the goals registered against him.

It is necessary, however, that there should be some sort of instruction given to the defenders. There were several occasions when two or three players were going for the ball at once, and Mingay was obstructed. Gilbert Brookes used to complain of the same thing last year, and I am afraid that Mingay will never give complete satisfaction, nor will any other custodian, until this fault is rectified.

When we have done with the defence, however, it must frankly be stated that the responsibility for the defeat does not rest with them entirely. The forwards had enough chances to have won the match; enough of the ball to have scored many times, but they seemed to get in each other's way at the important moment, and each inside man appeared to think that the great thing was that the goal should be scored by himself or it would not be a goal. The number of times that Reid and Thompson boggled chances by falling over each other was distressing, and the latter's terrible left foot usually found a helict for the ball that left Williams amused. The centre-forward did not distribute well, either. He is not a good distributor, but he is a very dangerous man if he can get the right sort of pass, and all too seldom was it given to him. Reid was more on the target with his shooting, but neither of this pair was as effective as in previous games. Shankly was the cleverest and the best factor in attack. Moffat did some smart things now and then, but he got the ball offener than Dennis. The latter was not well supplied, but when he got a chance he invariably did well.

In spite of all these faults the team had more of the game than Watford, and there is no need to get panicky. Indeed, the directors will be glad to know that they have only to get three new men to have a really good side. That is what someone came down the stand to tell me after the game on Saturday. There were 12,000 others at the match, but the directors may, if they feel so disposed, shake hands with themselves, because they have so far pleased one.

Watford were well served by Williams, as usual; by Gregory, who is still a great back; by Frank Smith, who was the cleverest half on view; and by Stephenson and Foster forward. The latter is an amateur from Wacombe Wanderers. None would have thought it by his style, either in the matter of football skill or in the tactics which some misguided folk appear to think belong only to the bonus men. Ask Bob Anderson.

SOUTHERN LEAGUE.

DISAPPOINTING GAME AT LUTON.

LEICESTER RESERVES FULL VALUE FOR THEIR WIN.

(By "CLAUDIUS").

LUTON RES. 1
LEICESTER CITY RES. 2

LUTON RES.—Purdy; Till, Greaves; Bedford, Richards, Neal; Thomson, Hart, Littlewood, Rogers, Robinson.

LEICESTER CITY RES.—Jarvie; Brown, Hooper; Baxter, Watson, Gough; Gibbs, Allen, Heathcock, Sharp, Webb.

Referee: Mr. W. J. Lewington, London.

This is the first "Reserves" game that I have reported this season, and I am bound to say that it was probably one of the worst games the Town Reserves have played for a long long time, and it was only Purdy who saved them from a heavier defeat. There was certainly an element of doubt as to his inability to save the two goals that he let through, but there were many shots that looked "winners all the way" that he saved remarkably well.

The visitors were entirely superior, much smarter on the ball, and what was more, kept it on the ground. Watson was a tower of strength at centre-half, and initiated many movements that smelt danger to the Town goal. Brown and Hooper, particularly, were fearless, and tackled and kicked well, whilst Jarvie, when called upon, was not lacking.

Luton won the toss, but it was soon apparent that Leicester were the better side, and although the City defence were called upon several times, they were not seriously troubled. The visitors had more of the play and over-run the Luton halves and consequently play rested more or less in the Luton territory. It presented Greaves, the new left back who had, I understand, come with good recommendations, a splendid opportunity to shine, but, allowing for new surroundings and companions, it must be written down he was not a success. At no time of the match did he shape at all promisingly.

The Town goal underwent some very narrow escapes before the City opened the scoring. Sharp sent the ball across, and Purdy advanced out of his goal, but the ball rolled to the feet of WEBB, who swung the ball back in the centre, and it curved into the net over the head of Neal, who had fallen back.

From this point to the interval, there was no looking back by Leicester, and apart from one or two break-away by the home team, it was a question of keeping their citadel intact, and both Till and Purdy well earned the applause of the crowd for their work.

Luton showed up better for a time after the interval, and in one of the attacks in the City

(Continued in column 4.)