

DRAW AT WALSALL

POOR GAME BRINGS PROFIT TO LUTON.

By Crusader.

WALSALL'S record was good enough to trouble the supporters of LUTON TOWN a good deal before the visit last Saturday, but quite a number made the journey to cheer on the team, and they were very pleased with the profit of a point. There were several features of the game, worthy of mention, or if not actually in the game, arising from the result. Here are a few. It was the fourth consecutive draw, the fourth consecutive draw in matches on opponents' grounds, and their first League game this season without a goal.

It was the seventh consecutive game without defeat, the fifth time that the forwards had failed to score and the sixth that the Town defence had not been penetrated in League games. It was the twelfth point the team had gained compared with the corresponding engagements of last season. It was only the third time this season that Walsall had failed to score, the fourth time their defence had proved impregnable, and their second blank League game.

Mr. Willet Ball was again in charge of the team, and thus maintained his proud record, that he has not yet travelled in charge of the first team when they have lost, and it was the seventh consecutive game with the first team for Baner, and he has not yet been on the losing side. It was his eighth game for the Town in all, and he was also on the winning side in the first game he played for the Club, which was for the Reserves, and has had the bonus every time.

If we could be sure that he was going to maintain that record in the remaining games, and that he would be on the winning side in matches at home, we should be almost sure of promotion, for there are encounters yet with all the leading clubs of the League with the exception of Northampton, and the cartoonist who had the audacity to suggest that the Town had but an outside chance of promotion when they failed to beat Watford, would need to draw another showing himself as a poor prophet.

It was a very poor game, for the Town, after starting well, and giving the home defence quite a lot of trouble, lost Bob Millar, who happened to put his foot in a hole, and as a result wrenched his ankle so badly that he had to be carried off, and, though he returned shortly before the interval, could scarcely raise a trot. This caused the withdrawal of Yardley to the left half position and Bedford had to play inside left, the whole attack becoming disorganised.

The Town played nice football in that period, and it required a splendid effort by O'Brien to give Walsall a footing in the Town territory. Moffat was tricky and troublesome, and gave Millar and Harris a harassing time when he was on the move, but they stuck to him well, and the crowd must have appreciated the fact that there was no disposition to bundle into the little fellow, for he either beat or was beaten by footwork and clever positioning.

There is a pronounced slope on the Walsall ground, but the ball did not travel quickly unless by the air route, and that was used oftener by the home side than by the Town. Roe was the mainspring of most of the Town's attacks, and Clark supplied him and Daly with fine passes, and also joined in some sparkling runs. Usually, however the ball was muddled by the winger when he might have taken his courage in his hands, and shot for the net, and the Town inside forwards were cramped and barred by a well-packed defence.

Once, however, Rennie met a pass from the winger, and drove in a great shot first time, and the ball skimmed the bar at a great pace. Against this had to be placed a bad blunder by Murphy, who ran clear of the Town defenders, and got well in to goal, having but Baner to beat, but he failed to get the right direction on the ball, and it travelled well wide. At the other end Roe had a shot, but lifted the ball high over the bar, after he and Daly had outwitted the opposition.

With Yardley in the middle line the Town attack was almost entirely on the right, and right well did Roe and Daly take on the onus. They played well, but the Walsall rearguard showed rare resource, and Rennie scarcely ever got near the ball without finding two or three in attendance upon him. Baner made a glorious save from Robson, this being one of the best bits of spectacular interest during the first half. The interval came with the score sheet showing:

WALSALL Nil
LUTON TOWN Nil

The second half found the Town for the greater part on the defensive. Walsall tried to turn the advantage of the slope in their favour, and certainly had much more of the play. Had the Town endeavoured to maintain balance and to play in the orthodox fashion, it is possible they might have put up a better game, but equally probable they would have lost. It was the determination of the players to obstruct rather than to build up attack that flustered the home forwards, and prevented them from getting a lead.

Of course, if Millar had been in his place this would not have happened but with only one wing upon which usual reliance could be placed, it was necessary that care should be taken of the Walsall right wing, from which danger was most to be feared. Yardley stuck closer than a brother to Moffat, and with Bedford also falling back to baulk Norman Thomson Fulton was able to keep a tighter hand on Robson, the clever inside left.

The result was that while the home forwards had more chances, and were doing a lot of attacking, they found what the Town forwards had suffered in the first half, a packed defence, and with Baner in fine form the score sheet remained blank. The best chances of the game fell to Moffat. In one case he was not more than three yards from the middle of the goal, right in front of Baner, and it seemed that he could not miss. Baner flung himself at the ball and it went out.

Everybody thought that Moffat had badly missed, especially as the referee gave a goal kick, but after the match it was stated by the Town and the Walsall players alike, that Baner got to the ball, and turned it aside, and that a corner kick should have been given. It was certainly a great save. On the other occasion Moffat was almost similarly placed, but in trying to put the ball wide of Baner's right hand, he got it wide of the post.

The Town's nearest to scoring in this half was when a fierce attack brought a corner kick and from Daly's placing Rennie took a chance, and shot with great power, the ball going for the farther end of goal, away from Wait. We all thought the latter had either headed or fisted out, but actually the shot hit the bar, and rebounded. On another occasion Daly drove hard into the side net when he had dribbled through, and Clark also had a strong shot saved under the bar by Wait.

In the closing stages Walsall made a tremendous effort to get the lead, but Baner never faltered and made some fine saves, and when the end came there was a tussle for possession in the Town goalmouth.

The sterling defence of the Town won the point. Baner again kept goal like a class man, and though some of his work is not quite orthodox, he gets there all right, and there can be no complaint either of his coolness, confidence or courage, and he is as agile as any custodian in the Third Division. He was well served by his backs, Harris playing skilfully, and though Graham was not always on top of the opposing wing, he was in good form.

Clark probably took the eye most at half, for he worked like a Trojan every minute of the game. He used his weight fairly, was quick in recovery, and did splendid work as a support. Fulton was always doing good things, especially in defence, and he was often in the picture with construction work. Millar did well while fit, and Yardley played well as his substitute.

Roe and Daly were just about the best wing on the field. Roe dribbled with great skill, and his passes to Daly enabled the winger to be the best of the four on view. Rennie did not have many chances, but tried hard in spite of being overcrowded, and though Bedford had to play a lone hand he did fine work as a roving commissioner.

Walsall's best were Groves, O'Brien, Moffat, and Robson.

There were 6,000 spectators.

WALSALL Nil
LUTON TOWN Nil

WALSALL.—Wait; Groves, Houldex; Bradford, O'Brien, Lochhead; Moffat, Thomson, Gough, Robson, Murphy.

LUTON.—Baner; Graham, Harris, Clark, Fulton, Millar; Daly, Roe, Rennie, Yardley, Bedford.

Referee: Captain A. J. Prince-Cox.