

PICKING UP POINTS.

LUTON DEFEAT WATFORD AND GILLINGHAM.

By Crusader.

At Watford, on Saturday:

LUTON TOWN	4
WATFORD	0

LUTON.—Harford; Kingham, Richards; Black, Fulton, Fraser; Daly, Yardley, Rennie, Woods, Bedford.

WATFORD.—Smith; Prior, Paton; Warner, McBain, Woodward, Holland, Barnett, McPherson, Shepherd, Daniels.

Referee.—Mr. P. G. Reed, West Bromwich.

At Luton, on Monday:

LUTON TOWN	2
GILLINGHAM	0

LUTON.—Harford; Kingham, Richards; Fulton, Morgan, Fraser; Daly, Yardley, Rennie, Woods, Bedford.

GILLINGHAM.—Smith; Bartley, Wilson; Ellis, Beacham, Bishop; Whyte, Cheesmur, Castie, Dowell, Gore.

Referee.—Mr. E. C. Carnwell, Lichfield.

SOMEONE suggested a fortnight ago that Luton Town would be an "away" team this season, and there appears to be some justification for that assumption. They have played three games away and have not been beaten, the one defeat being that at home, when Southend did the trick. After the disappointments over the home games with Norwich and Southend, the Town's remarkable success at Watford on Saturday was nothing short of extraordinary, and while far from suggesting that it was achieved in a fashion that satisfied everybody at Luton, it was undoubtedly a notable performance, and did much to revive the pessimists who had swooned after the Southend disaster.

To say that scant justice was done to the Town in the reports broadcast from Watford is to put it very mildly. Such utterly absurd statements as "four shots and four goals," and "five chances and four goals," do not commend the writers to the 4,000 followers of Luton who visited Watford, and the attempts to belittle the Town's feat especially after so many years, would be annoying were they not farcical. The Town merited their success because they finished better, and because their defence limited the chances of the Watford team. The Town were better at both ends of the field, and that is where games are won.

No one at Luton pretends that the team is playing ideal football; the players are not well together, and much improvement will be required at half-back and forward if a real promotion fight is to be waged, but they had nothing to learn from Watford in the matter of clean play, and the fact that they produced a more effective game than the tip-tap-toe tactics of Watford's expensive contingent does not minimise the value of the achievement. Watford have had a phenomenal run of luck in their games with Luton, and it is pettish to show pique because of an unexpected set-back. When Watford come to Luton, whether they win or lose, we will try to give them some meed of praise.

Monday night's game with Gillingham was a somewhat patchy affair after the excitement of Saturday. The Town had to fight hard all the time, for Gillingham played with great persistence and pluck, as becomes young players. At times the game was too strenuously fought, and the referee could seldom have whistled so often against players for persistent elbowing and pushing as against the Gillingham players. This team, however, will do well, and when the edge is taken off the temper of one or two, their play will be all the better. The Town rearguard had plenty to do, and the work of this department in both games has won high praise.

Harford is a real acquisition, and is a certainty for the position on this form, while Kingham is a really high-class defender, speedy and judicious in tackling and sure in his kicking, though he needs to get the ball away at a better trajectory—the skimming shot that can be collected by the forwards without having to wait for it to drop from the clouds. Richards is playing right at the top of his form; better than ever, I think, and if he is going to show improvement when the grounds are softer we have little need to fear for the rear.

Black was injured early at Watford, and unable to play on Monday. Daly did useful work in his place on Saturday, and Fulton, moved from centre-half on Monday, was as whole-hearted and serviceable as could be expected. So far, Fulton has shared in every bonus the Town have paid to the players, for he has never been on the losing side, having been twelfth man when not playing. He worked very hard on Saturday, and on Monday I thought he showed promise as a flank half. Fraser played magnificently in both games, and his tireless and relentless play has been invaluable. Morgan returned unexpectedly to the team on Monday night. To my mind he is not yet as fit as he can be, but I like his style, and if the forwards will "fall to it," then there will be easier times for the defence, and more goals. No player can keep the ball down better, and the absence of "rough stuff" is no discount from his ability. I am content to echo the opinion of old players: wait till the football weather comes along.

The forwards are the most disappointing part of the team. Rennie has certainly advanced as a leader: his distribution is as near perfection as that of any leader Luton has had in my day, and none has equalled him as a marksman. Unfortunately he is not getting the response he deserves. The line does not weld well. If Harry Woods had his speed of ten years ago, there would be no holding the two of them, but Harry does not conserve his energy, and is doing a lot of fetching and carrying that belongs to middle men. Yardley works with all his might, but he also stays in the rear, and I wish he would keep in his mind that when he keeps on the premises with Rennie goals come. Daly did not do so well on Monday night as in previous games, but is all right; on the contrary, Bedford is nothing like the dangerous winger of last season. The number of goals Rennie obtained by co-operation with the wingers last season was considerable, and they have only to serve him the same to see the serial continued.

AT WATFORD.

THE main feature of the Town's great victory at Watford was the brilliant defence of Kingham, Richards and Harford, for although Rennie did the hat-trick, the greater burden fell upon the rearguard in the first half. So well did these three defend, however, that the home forwards did not have so many openings as the Town. Very few good chances came the way of the Watford attack, and they could not be accused of missing a lot of openings. The Town forwards, indeed, missed far more chances, the reason being that the Town played the more open game in attack, and their rearguard was so compact that McPherson and his colleagues never got an easy opportunity.

Woods once, Daly twice, and Rennie might have scored in the first half-hour, and Smith still have been blameless, while once Bedford had the misfortune to see a sharp first-time shot deflected by a defender. On the other hand, when the home forwards aimed for the target they had to do so from fairly long range, for when the ball hovered in the Town goal-mouth the height of Kingham and Richards, as well as the skilful positioning of Harford, were supreme. And Harford had some difficult work to negotiate, but the protection he received counted for a great deal, and the defence deserved the plaudits of the crowd when they retired with their sheet clean.

Time after time the Watford forwards, by clever midfield play, in which the inside forwards and McBain shone by reason of their combination, opened a way to the Luton end, but every inch of the ground was sternly contested, and with Harford making brilliant saves when good shots by McPherson, Sheppard and Daniels were put in, it was not surprising that the home forwards lost heart to some extent. There was a different state of things at the other end, for while the Town forwards did not show the same natchiness in outwitting the home halves, the Watford backs wobbled badly, and the Town often got clean past them.

Rennie smartly paved the way for the first goal, for after receiving when ringed by opponents, he contrived to slip the ball through for YARDLEY to take it in his stride, dart through the gap allowed by Prior and Paton, and Smith was beaten by a fast shot all along the ground. This was seven minutes before the change of ends, and three minutes after the hand-shaking Prior, in spite of using his hands, failed to gather the ball, with the result that RENNIE darted past him and quickly beat Smith with a perfectly placed shot. The Town thus crossed over with a substantial lead.

LUTON	0
WATFORD	2

Another characteristic bit of opportunism placed the Town farther ahead fifteen seconds after the resumption. Fraser originated the movement, for he speedily tackled Barnett when that youngster was endeavouring to pass to Holland. He passed to Woods, the Town skipper lifted the ball forward, Prior was dispossessed while trying to control it, and RENNIE dashed round him and crashed in a fast left foot drive that entered the net right away from the hapless Smith. It was a crushing blow, and, if they needed it, further spurred the Town to the task that remained.

It was refreshing to see the methods of the Town were such as to give the home team the least encouragement. The ball was kept in play well, but received plenty of boot, and no time was lost by halves and backs in getting it away from the danger zone. Nevertheless, Watford made desperate attempts, the midfield play often being attractive, but try as they would they could not penetrate. Their wingers occasionally broke through, but the shooting element were thwarted consistently by the stout-hearted back. With Harford in great form, the best efforts came to nought.

The spectators will not readily forget two drives from Sheppard and one from McBain, all of which were saved at full length by Harford diving across goal. They were brilliant examples of agility and anticipation, and served to inspire his colleagues. With the Town forwards always on the look-out for a burst, and the home backs very shaky whenever Rennie got possession, the Watford crowd gradually lost their interest, and in the last twenty minutes the Town had the better of the general play, too. The climax came when RENNIE got the fourth goal. Fraser made a lot of ground, and then sent the ball into the goal-mouth, where the bounce beat Paton, and the Town centre-forward ran round him and coolly directed the ball into the net — again right away from Smith.

The closing stages were not uninteresting, for either goal might have fallen, but whereas the Town goal remained intact because of the relentless work of the defenders, the Watford goal escaped because the Town forwards were not disposed to waste energy or take a lot of risk. This was wise in view of the engagement of Monday night, and also the fact that Black had been a crippled passenger for over an hour, having had his knee hurt in a tackle after twenty minutes' play. Thus the forward line was handicapped by Daly having to play at right-half.

LUTON TOWN	4
WATFORD	0

GILLINGHAM'S VISIT.

ON Monday evening Gillingham put up a splendid challenge on the Town ground, and, though defeated, they were by no means disgraced. Their team is far better than last season, and the numerous new players will carry the colours high this season, or I am very much mistaken. Youth and strength, with no small degree of skill in the forward positions, are factors that will tell in their favour with longer association.

The Town considerably improved the better of the first-half play, but the stout opposition of the Gillingham halves and backs was successful for half-an-hour. Many fine movements came to nothing simply because the Town wingers, Bedford in particular, could not get the ball squarely across when they had overcome the defenders, and time after time Smith had only to stand still, and the ball fell into his arms, while the Town inside men were waiting in striking position without the wherewithal to strike.

Gillingham were a "pushing" lot in more than one sense, and the whistle was frequently heard, but the methods served to keep the Town at bay. Woods narrowly missed with a header, and Yardley made the crowd gasp by his failure to steer the ball past Smith when only two or three yards out. Harford had nothing very exacting, and Smith's duties were

chiefly that he should keep his eyes open and his arms open.

First blood was drawn in just over half-an-hour, when Daly, who had taken part in some of the best movements, got the ball across, and it beat Wilson on the bounce. Before the back could recover RENNIE had rushed in, and Smith was hopelessly beaten by a terrific shot. The spectators had hardly regained their breath from the cheering when Fraser initiated a movement by darting into the middle and then turning the ball over to Woods; he lifted it along, and Rennie, jumping high, nodded it backwards for YARDLEY to slip in and, after a short and sharp tussle with Bartley, shoot into the net.

The second half opened well, but play deteriorated a great deal. The Town forwards were very disappointing, and matters were made worse when Daly was hurt, and was a passenger for the last half-hour. The Town put in a lot of good work in the early minutes of this half, and Smith had to bestir himself many times. As the game wore on, however, Kingham and Richards were sorely taxed, and now and then Harford had his hands full of spilling point.

There were periods when Gillingham threatened to overrun the Town defence, because the halves seemed to falter, but the Town backs were in fine fettle, and frustrated attack after attack in splendid style. Smith had the stiffer shots to deal with, but Harford had his share, and quite as much as he wanted, and when the end came both teams had become tired, and were ready for a rest. The Town deserved to win because they were the better side in the first half and took two of their chances then, but Gillingham won many friends by their gallant efforts to save the game.