

LUTON LOSE AT WALSHALL.

BETTER FINISHING WOULD HAVE WON.

(By "CRUSADER").

SOME idea of the conditions at Walsall may be gathered from the fact that the glove I was wearing was soaked, and water streamed from the writing-desk. A piercing wind decorated noses and ears, and seemed to penetrate to the marrow of the spectators, so what it must have been for the players, who were operating on a heavy and slippery ground, they only can tell. Possibly these drawbacks had something to do with the fraying of tempers in the second half, when the game became decidedly rough, and the referee had to speak to a player or two on each side.

Luton Town lost because very soon after the start Fulton made an unfortunate pass back towards his own goal; none of his colleagues could reach it, but Albert Walters, the Town Reserve centre-forward last season, snapped up the ball in his stride and rushed through to give Banes no possible chance of saving. This came after seven minutes, and it must be admitted that on the run of the game until then, and for a considerable time afterwards, Walsall were much the better side, and were only kept at bay by the stout defence put up by Banes and his backs.

Apart from fugitive raids, in which McInnes and Yardley were prominent, the Town were not impressive in the first half-hour, but subsequently opened out well, and from equality in the closing minutes of the first half, rose to superiority, and Walsall were extremely fortunate to get both points. That they did so was chiefly due to the fine goalkeeping of Biddlestone, who has the making of an International. At no time did he lose his head, and though he had a good deal of luck, yet his positioning and his sure handling evoked admiration.

The Town players generally maintained their recent good spirit and fine form, and there were movements in the second half that were really high-class, so cleverly were they initiated and carried on, but the failure was at the moment when they should have succeeded. It was not enough that Yardley should be on the spot when the ball came across, for the home defenders crowded round him, and the shooting chances he had were only won after his strenuous struggles with one or two opponents.

The Town left wing, with Fraser behind them, constituted the most dangerous section on the field, and in the second half swept down time after time, only to find themselves or their colleagues baffled at the last moment. It was largely the staunch work and the stamina of the Town halves that enabled the forwards to have such a strong hand in the proceedings in the second half, when Walsall spent most of their time in their own penalty area. It would have gone hard with the home side had not Roe and Eyres fallen to the rear.

Biddlestone, however, was the mainstay of the home side. Twice in the first half he saved when goals seemed certain, but later in the game he was brilliant, and shots that would have beaten the average goalkeeper were saved without fuss or show. Every forward on the Town side, as well as Clark, gave the Walsall goalkeeper opportunities to prove his mettle, but the sadder part of the story was that he should have been let off so easily on several occasions when foeman had only to turn the ball past him to secure a point for Luton.

McInnes and Boylen were greatly at fault in this respect, both failing badly. It was a pity, for the former especially, as he was playing far better than in recent games, and a goal would have been a fitting fulfilment of his skilful work in the approach. Boylen was never at home against unrelenting opposition, and at least two simple openings were missed by him. Birch did not play up to him too well, though doing fine work in conjunction with Yardley, but Drinnan's mission was to provide for McInnes, and he did it splendidly. Yardley was a fine, enterprising leader, and in spite of returning without a goal, put up one of his best games in the position.

Fraser was the highest class half-back on view, and revelled in his job, while Clark cannot be moved from the pivotal place while he shows the strength and forcefulness, both in attack and defence, that he showed in this trial. Towards the end of the game he was pretty well the master of the mid-field, and came as near scoring as any player with his fine shots.

Fulton improved after a bad start, and also did much to swing the tide in favour of the Town. Richards has seldom played with more success, and Smith was a solid and purposeful partner. Banes also did grand work, making clever saves, though on the whole he had less severe tests than Biddlestone.

Walsall have found a brilliant goalkeeper, and will surely be able to sell him before long. The backs were resolute and vigorous, and Helliwell a pivot with constructive ideas, and the physique to defend. Roe and Walters were the pick of the forwards, but the former did not receive good support.

There were 7,000 spectators.

WALSALL	1
LUTON TOWN	nil

WALSALL.—Biddlestone; Groves, Houldey; Muldoon, Helliwell, Bradford; Mason, Roe, Walters (A), Eyres, Murphy.

LUTON.—Banes; Richards, Smith; Fulton, Clark, Fraser; Boylen, Birch, Yardley, Drinnan, McInnes.

Referee:—Mr. F. H. Burton, Leicester.