

# Crusader Comments ON THE VISIT OF WALSTALL.

WHEN rain continued to fall after noon on Saturday, I said to a friend that Walsall's chances would be improved by thirty per cent., and I think this was proved. The ground and ball were so difficult to master that neither team could consistently overcome the trouble, and play generally was poor. The Town were the more aggressive, but could not beat down a stern and resolute defence, and so Walsall took away a point.

Walsall's methods were discovered at once, for Godfrey twice tried to chop Bryce out of his stride, and on each occasion the Walsall defence had difficulty in keeping their goal intact. Godfrey was in trouble several times for similar infringement, but it was typical of the intentness of the Walsall halves and backs. They never stood on ceremony, but hustled and hustled strongly, and threw the Town forwards off their game.

Fortunately they could not do the same with the backs, even when the middle line sagged a bit after change of ends. There they met with no quarter, although there was seldom a foul by a Town defender. Once Gale offended, and in his case it was not by tripping, but by lusty charging of the sturdy Albert Walters, who was not unwilling to try conclusions with his shoulders when the burly pivot barred the way.

Bryce was fed cleverly by Dent and Fraser, and it was chiefly through his quick runs and passes that the Walsall rearguard was kept busy in the first half, though Heslop and M'Nestry also did good work in approach. Good shots were infrequent, however, and John was not only on his best behaviour, but had a lot of luck. I do not think we have seen a goal-keeper stop so many shots without knowing it until the ball had struck him.

He got in the way of efforts from Bryce and M'Nestry in this way in the first half, and the same pair and Heslop afterwards, and twice scrambled the ball out of danger after he had stopped it merely because he happened to be in the path, and not by anticipation. Yet he should have been beaten time and again, and I think he would have been had the Town forwards employed more open methods, and shot for goal instead of trying to dribble close in.

His two best saves, curiously enough, were from shots by Clark, one of which was a free-kick. He sent that flying over the bar, and the other he dived at, and managed to turn round the post. Our inside forwards had comparatively few shots, and even when shots were tried, and appeared likely to beat the goal-keeper, Town players as well as Walsall defenders got in the way. Rennie in the first half and Heslop in the second had drives stopped by M'Nestry who, in his eagerness, had got well in.

Apart from a period of about fifteen minutes after the change of ends, Walsall did not try to play constructive football, but relied on kick and rush, and there were few movements in which halves and forwards took part co-operatively. The Walsall forwards got very little help from the men behind, and did a lot of foraging, especially the inside wing men, who were playing half-back while the men from those positions were drawn into the rear to help.

Especially was this so towards the end of the game, and time after time one could see at least four Walsall players in a straight line, all concerned with back play. Helliwell can seldom have spent more time in his own penalty area, but he played a fine defensive game, and more than once saved his goal when the others would have been beaten. Indeed, there were occasions when the whole of the Walsall team, with the exception of Albert Walters and the two wingers, were struggling in their penalty area.

That was how Walsall came to share the points, and though at one period they looked like coming off best, they could not continue to risk defence for the sake of attack. On the whole it may be said that their methods were justified, since they took a point that should not have been theirs on the actual run of the play.

Banes made two or three good saves; Kingham played a grand game, and Hodgson was just as good, while the halves, if not always dominating the game, at least spent as much time on attack as on defence. The flank halves were noticeable for support to the attack, and Gale was a potent element in the defence. It might have been more profitable if the centre-half had come up the field behind his forwards a little better, but he played a strong game, and it is noteworthy that in the four games he has played the only goal against has been from a free-kick. Others, of course, share the credit.

The forwards were not so well together

as we expect nowadays, and the ball should be kept on the move more. Heslop and M'Nestry made many dashing raids, and Dent gave Bryce a lot of cunning passes, while Rennie got the ball to the wings well. There was not one that was at his best as a marksman, however, and if any player deserved particular mention for effectiveness it was Bryce, who played well in spite of missing one of the easiest chances.

Walsall's best were John, who kept goal well; Houldey at back, and Helliwell a half. Not much was seen of the forwards other than during the spell of attacking mentioned, but the wingers were good, and got the ball across in capital style, but Walters had little support for his work in front of goal.

There were 7,000 spectators.

LUTON. — Banes; Kingham, Hodgson; Clark, Gale, Fraser; Heslop, M'Nestry, Rennie, Dent, Bryce.

WALSALL.—John; Walters (F.), Holdey; Godfrey, Helliwell, Muldoon; Parle, Bradford, Walters (A.), Eyres, Barnes.

Referee: Mr. A. J. Attwood, Newport.