Crusader Comments

ON THE CROPPER AT WATFORD.

IT was difficult to imagine that the LUTON TOWN team we saw at WATFORD on Saturday could have won any game this season. It could not have been that the occasion was too big for them, for there were as many experienced players in one side as in the other. It was not any superlative brilliance of the Watford team, for they will need a vast improvement in quality if they are to pass on to the fourth round. The only reason for the poor exhibition, as far as one could judge, was that nearly all the players were suffering an "off" day on the same date.

There must have been some 7,000 followers of the Town, probably more, and there could be no complaint of lack of vocal support. Every follower was tuned up to the right pitch, and if confidence on their side of the rails counted for anything, the game would have been won in the first five minutes. Every reasonable means of conveyance unloaded its quota of followers at Watford, and so helped to swell the crowd to 17,700 and the receipts to £1,087 10s. We were sadly disillusioned, and the game was just as much in favour of the moderate side as the score suggests. Had the Town played anything like the game they showed at Highbury, Watford could not have won.

There was something like an epidemic of miskicking among the Town in the opening stages, and the goal scored by Watford after four minutes' play was the outcome of weakness in covering up, though full credit should be given to Chapman for a brilliant run and a nice centre. The dash of JAMES, who put the ball into the net, had unsteadied the Town defence, and they lost the ball in a panicky scramble, so that he had quite a simple task to shoot past Banes. There were a few sallies by the Town, but the open game was exploited with success by the home team, and they kept the ball out of the muddy middle so that the wingers could make headway.

When the second goal was scored in 23 minutes by WOOLISCROFT, that also did not flatter the home team. It was the reward of enterprise and of the ability to take advantage of a much unsettled defence. The Watford halves had a better grip of the game than the Town's intermediate line, and they not only spoiled the ragged attempts of the Town attack, but also helped their own forwards much better. There were big gaps in the Town defence, and the Watford forwards positioned so much better that they always appeared to have much more room in which to operate than did the Town. One or two efforts, notably a clever shot from Rennie and a centre from M'Nestry, deserved success, but had they scored it would have been against the run of the play. The lead of two goals to Watford at half-time was merited.

Then we hoped of better things when the Town began to press after the change of ends, and though few good shots were seen, there was rather more mettle in their general play. The goal that YARDLEY scored nine minutes after the change of ends sent Luton hopes soaring, and for a few minutes the team almost touched the standard of the previous ties. An equaliser was threatened again and again, but the little bit of thrust and determination that would have put the teams even was missing. Then they relapsed into their unmethodical scrambling play of the first half, and the game went in Watford's favour. Good work by a harassed rearguard alone prevented goals for Watford, and when, with seven minutes to go, BARNETT headed a capital goal from a free kick by McBain, the position of the Town was hopeless, and Watford were in the third round.

Knowing that every player was as eager as he possibly could be to be on the winning side, one does not criticise as with blame. They were deeply disappointed, and had they been successful, would have been almost overjoyed. Still, it was clear to all that the main deficiency was in the middle line. Though the best of the three, McGinnigle never came near his form in the previous Cup games, and was not quick enough to master James. Neither Hale nor Fraser could get going properly at any time, and though trying desperately to get the hang of things, they were often out of position and outpaced. So the backs had a too heavy task, and it was not a matter for wonder that they faltered often, and that Banes was disposed to run out of goal often.

The forwards rarely got moving as a line, and apart from one or two dribbles, they were seldom dangerous other than during the period following the goal. Bryce and M'Nestry might have done the trick had they been well fed. Yardley was the most assertive of the inside forwards. Rennie got few passes, and was well watched by McBain and the backs, and Dent had to work so hard in the assistance of his half-backs that he was almost lost as an attacking unit. Altogether, the team played just about as poorly as we could fear they would.

Watford's rearguard was not very severely tested, but that was largely due to McBain, who played a great game. Chapman and Barnett were the pick of the forwards, both doing splendid work, and James was a thrustful leader.

WATFORD 3
LUTON TOWN 1

WATFORD.—Hewett; Brown, Davison; Smith, McBain, Woodward; Chapman, Barnett, James, Wooliscroft, Lindsay.

LUTON.—Banes; Kingham, Hodgson; Hale, McGinnigle, Fraser; M'Nestry, Yardley, Rennie, Dent, Bryce.

REFEREE.—Mr. P. G. Arnold, London.