

WATFORD NEARLY WON

SECOND HALF RALLY ENABLES TOWN TO DRAW

Coen's Great Display

(By CRUSADER)

LUTON TOWN 2
(Ball, Stephenson)

WATFORD 2
(O'Brien, Lane)

LUTON. — Coen; Kingham, Mackey; Brown, Thayne, Fraser; Martin, Bell, Ball, Rennie, Stephenson.

WATFORD. — McLaren; Brown, Moran; Findlay, Armstrong, Woodward; Rattray, Barnett, Lane, O'Brien, Poxton.

Referee.—Mr. R. G. Rudd, Kenton.

OF all the disappointments Luton Town followers have endured thus far none was greater than that when Watford took away a point from Luton on Saturday. The lapses of the Town at home this season are inexplicable, and only the actual evidence of the results in their away games remain to assure their supporters that they can play better. They did not deserve to win this match, nobly though they rallied in the second half; for the team work, the understanding, and what is of paramount importance in these days, the pace of the visitors was superior.

Indeed, it can be safely said that few members of the side, except Coen, in the first half rose to the level of the Watford team. Even the backs and halves, who have dominated the last three games away from home, showed a remarkable falling off, and were unable to counter the swiftly-moving Watford forwards, who could have held a decisive lead at the interval had they shown as much efficiency in front of goal as in their approach.

There was a very big improvement after the change of ends, but it was courageous rather than the sagacious, and it has to be frankly admitted that at no period did the team reveal the skill and the combination they have shown in their travels.

In these days pace has become a fetish, especially in the Third Division, and though it does not make for attractive football, if it brings favourable results it is what the supporters desire.

Watford had the pace, and in the first session they also adapted it to skill, otherwise they could not have given Coen such trouble. They were not by any means out of the picture in the second half, though in the main they were struggling to keep their charge intact. Nevertheless their goal did not undergo such narrow escapes as that of the Town before the interval, which is a pointer to the general superiority of the Watford attack.

One must not forget that the conditions were not conducive to good football, and judging from events it seemed that Tom Mackey gave Watford the advantage of the elements in the first half, though at the outset there did not appear to be any real difference.

Watford's right wing quickly came into action, but McLaren was the first goalkeeper required, though he had time in hand when he raced Martin for possession. The Town left raised another assault, and Rennie sent a hard drive whizzing just over the bar. Watford brought a lot of determination into their play, and their right wing did many clever things, so that Coen was applauded for a grand save when Lane met a moving ball first time, and shot hard for the farther end of goal. A similar movement a minute later enabled Lane to divert a pass from Barnett well away from Coen, but he was well offside.

The Town defenders were not positioning well enough to thwart the opposition, who kept the ball moving quickly all across the line, but the more danger came from the right wing, where Rattray had too much scope.

The Town replied in good style, and they also kept the ball moving from player to player; they gave the Watford defenders as much work as they wanted. Armstrong did very fine work in holding up the moves through the middle, and McLaren had to save several times. Once Martin had a clear run through, and with ball well up and awaiting the pass unmarked a goal seemed almost a certainty, but Martin preferred a shot, and the ball struck Moran's legs.

Martin made amends just afterwards when he sent a pass into the middle;

BALL snapped up the ball, and was challenged promptly by Moran, but the Town centre-forward cleverly outwitted the full-back by backheeling the ball, spinning round and shooting hard from a difficult angle, McLaren being well beaten.

For a time the game went evenly, but Watford gradually assumed command, and their forwards played fine football. Coen saved many useful shots, but he was eventually beaten by O'BRIEN. It appeared to me that the Town goalkeeper should have cut out the centre from the right wing, but before he could make up his mind O'Brien had rushed in and headed into the net.

Thereafter, there was virtually only one team in it for attack, and Coen effected brilliant saves. Twice he flung himself at the feet of Lane and robbed him, and he cleverly anticipated rattling shots.

The Town left wing twice made strong efforts, and Ball was forestalled just in time by McLaren; on another occasion the Town centre-forward got his head to the ball and beat the defence, and Bell rushed in and appeared certain to score, but the ball slithered just wide of the post with the goal vacant.

However, Watford were undoubtedly having the better of the game, and they forced several corners. Coen saved magnificently, but after one or two flag-kicks there was a fierce attack which finally resulted in Watford scoring. Coen was just able to stop an awkward shot from the left, and before he could get the ball away LANE had the ball in the net.

Coen it was saved the Town goal again when Lane went through a gap in the Town defence; Coen came out and dived at the forward's feet; he got the ball, but could not hold it, and Lane awkwardly rose and touched the ball behind for a corner. Lane appealed to the referee, apparently for a penalty-kick on the ground that Coen had held his foot.

The Town made a desperate effort to get on terms just before the cross-over. Bell and Martin made the best run the forwards had shown, but the latter's centre was anticipated by McLaren. Then Stephenson made a strong solo effort, beating Brown in a tussle and shooting hard into goal, but the ball rebounded from Moran's legs.

Watford had no more than their due when they retired with the lead.

WATFORD 2
LUTON TOWN 1

One of the faults of the Town during the first half had been the tendency for defenders to hang, on instead of clearing first-time when there was danger, and, after two or three slight skirmishes Brown and Kingham nearly let the visitors through by tip-tapping, instead of booting the ball clear. However, Brown's pace overhauled Poxton, and the ball went into touch.

Still, the visitors were in Luton territory, too close for Coen's comfort, and, when Poxton lofted the ball right across the goal, Fraser had to be sprightly to get to it before Rattray.

The Town began to show more life, and the Watford defenders had to work hard, but they never risked trouble by holding the ball, first-time kicking and tackling being successful.

Now and then the visitors got away, and were always dangerous anywhere within 30 yards of goal, for they took position well, and shot quickly.

The Town became even more aggressive, and Watford found it necessary to withdraw their inside forwards to assist in defence. Still, there were few concerted efforts by the Town forwards. Usually, the danger came from individual thrusts. Once Rennie appeared certain to equalise, for he was but a few feet from goal with the ball in front of him when a desperate rush by McLaren and two colleagues flooded the Town forward, and the ball went behind.

When Martin and Stephenson took the inside wing positions there was a stronger attack, there being more vim in the

(Continued in next column)

strokes at goal. Watford stood up to it bravely, and, though very hard pressed, the goal having many escapes, there seemed little likelihood of a goal.

Martin just missed with a snap shot, and, on another occasion, McLaren saved finely as he threw himself at a first-time shot by Rennie, and the ball cannoned off Martin's legs, and missed the goal by inches, with the custodian helpless.

Pressure increased, and the visitors wasted time very artfully, but the Town were now well on top, and the longer they went the more determined they were, and the better football they played. Centres from right and left fell into the packed goalmouth, and, eventually, Martin drove the ball across to Rennie, who had closed in; he sent it back, and STEPHENSON met it first time, and McLaren was beaten all over the shop.

Watford had to concentrate entirely on defence in the late stages, and were lucky to escape. They resisted grandly, and when McLaren dived, and kept out a grand drive from Bell, there was little hope of further success for the Town.

THE PLAYERS.

I have already said that Watford would have been unlucky to have been deprived of a point after such a capital exhibition in the first half. In the second half the Town did much to rehabilitate themselves, and in a measure they were unfortunate not to get another goal, but, in the words of the referee, it was a great game, and a good result on the run of play.

Coen has never had so much difficult work, or so much anxiety in any previous match. He, more than any other player, earned the Town a point, and there need be no fear whatever in his department.

In the first half, his colleagues in defence were far below their best. That, in considerable degree could be attributed to the fact that the halves did not show up so well. Thayne had a poor time against the Watford inside forwards, whose quick transfers had him guessing, and he was not so good with his head. He did very much better in the second half, when he came near his best. Brown had a tendency to leave his wing a lot of room, by moving into the middle, though there were times when we were glad to see him turn up and despoil an opponent. Fraser was often beaten by the trickiness of the Watford right-wing, though more than any other half he gave his forwards good service.

The defects in the middle before half-time, however, made for a gap between the backs, and that was why Lane was so frequently dangerous.

Both Kingham and Mackey were drawn out of position, and had a very tough job. They also improved with the subsequent improvement in the second period, and both were more reliable.

The forwards were disappointing as a line, and never came anywhere near their display of the previous Saturday. Ball strove hard to get some semblance of unified effort, and contrived to lead the line well, though the support was ragged. His goal was one of the cleverest seen on the ground for a long time, but the line, as a whole, did not shoot well, nor did they position well.

In the second half, they certainly mastered the opposition in midfield, but were not good enough to overcome a rugged defence at close quarters.

McLaren had not the severe task that fell upon Coen, but yet had enough to bring out his best. His backs were very strong, and assertive, and what was very likeable about their methods was the first time clearances. Armstrong played the policeman on Ball, and did great work at the most critical times, while his flank colleagues also worked very hard.

Of the forwards, the more danger came from the right wing, and Kattray especially, was troublesome. He showed speed and neat control, and middled the ball well.

Barnett played up to him cleverly, at.* Lane also did well. The left wing pair were not so stylish, but were energetic, and a bright feature of the attack, as a whole, was the promptitude with which they took position, and shot for goal.

The attendance was 11,260, and the receipts £669 4s. 3d.