

THE CLASH AT WATFORD

TERRIFIC STRUGGLE ENDS ALL SQUARE

Brace for Ball

(By CRUSADER)

WATFORD	2
Lane, Lowe	
LUTON TOWN	2
Ball (2)	

WATFORD.—McLaren; Brown, Lewis (D.); Findlay, Woodward, Davies (L.); Rattray, Lowe, Lane, Devan, Davies (W.)

LUTON.—Coen; Kingham, Mackey; Colquhoun, Thayne, Smith; Crompton, Martin, Ball, Roberts, Stephenson. Referee: R. G. Rudd, Kenton.

THOUSANDS OF LUTON TOWN followers returned home delighted with the further evidence of the team's quality. Possibly they were disappointed that both points were not garnered, and the majority felt that the team had not had a square deal on the field. Many said so, but while I think there should have been two penalty kicks awarded, and very nearly a third, Referee Rudd is always chary of making such awards without the strongest case. Then Watford pulled out that bit extra which they appear always to have in reserve for Luton, and that being so, a point was a valuable return.

A CRACKING PACE

Considering the wretched weather, it was a very good match, and, with one or two exceptions there was nothing of which one could complain in the behaviour of the players. Only one player lost his temper badly, and that was Brown, the Watford defender. He may have received a quiet caution, and certainly deserved it. Hard knocks were given and taken with good spirit, and the pace was a cracker, well maintained by both teams from start to finish, with Luton going the stronger at the end. Watford people thought their team very unlucky not to win; Luton folk felt that Fate had been very hard on them, and had taken the shape of referee or linesman.

THE PENALTY CLAIMS

I think there should have been penalties awarded when Ball was brought down, and when Woodward handled the ball round the post, but the referee did not take that view, and there is not much comfort in dwelling upon it. Watford gave the ball more boot, and played the man a good deal more than the Town, though I am not suggesting that they were guilty of too much vigour. There were times when their forwards developed movements similar to their magnificent play of the first half in their match at Luton, but they could not maintain it; on the other hand, there were spells in which they were well-nigh outplayed, and especially in the closing stages. Both goalkeepers made brilliant saves, but there have been none better on that ground than two made by McLaren in the closing stages, and it was he who deferred the equalising goal until the last minute.

WOODWARD'S INFLUENCE

From the start, it was apparent that the players were all out, and the tension among the crowd infected the performers. When the Town kicked off, Martin took from Ball, tricked Devan, and then braced the ball well out to the left, and the Watford defenders had to gather to that side to foil the efforts of Roberts and Stephenson to break through. Woodward steadied his colleagues, and the home right had a turn, Rattray showing nippiness that augured ill for Coen. The Town goalkeeper had to use his hands two or three times, though there was nothing like a shot, but after a take-up in the Town goalmouth, Coen got the ball away cleverly.

Watford persisted for a few minutes. Lowe and Lane being troublesome, but they were driven back from a bright pass by Martin. Stephenson beat Brown with a neat header, and Ball dashed between the backs; as he was about to shoot, Brown and Woodward brought him down about a couple of yards inside the penalty area, and there was an immediate yell for a penalty kick, but this was refused, and McLaren got the ball away.

EASY CHANCE MISSED

Another swift run by Rattray took him clean past the backs, and he cut in well, but when he tried to shoot, the slippery ball skidded off his boot and went behind. W. Davies was next applauded for a good run and centre, but Thayne headed clear, and Woodward did the same at the other end, when Crompton took a pass from Colquhoun and went down, to drop the ball into the goalmouth. Then came a big disappointment for the home crowd, for Davies (W.) got clean away and middled; two or three defenders failed to intercept, and Lowe was left with a clear shot half a dozen yards from goal; he also missed badly, and when Rattray raced up and, from an acute angle, drove the ball in very hard, Coen went down and saved splendidly.

LUTON'S REPLY

There was another loud claim for a penalty against the Watford defenders a moment later. Ball slipped the ball forward, and Martin took it in his stride and was well set for goal, but before he could shoot, he also bit the mud. Then Findlay badly tripped Roberts, and the Luton section of the crowd cheered ironically when a free-kick was awarded. For some time the Town gained the ascendancy, the halves and backs coming well up behind the forwards, and the ball being dribbled and passed with fine accuracy, but there were few attempts to shoot, as there should have been under such conditions. Centres came from Crompton and Stephenson, and only the steadiness of Woodward, and the desperate play of Brown and Lewis, kept the assailants out.

LANE SCORES

Two or three corner kicks were taken, and once Martin headed splendidly, the ball flashing past Brown as the latter hurried himself at it, and passing only inches wide. Brown raced up to tackle Roberts, and when the latter shouldered him off, he followed up and fouled the Luton forward in a manner which brought fierce yells from the crowd.

Crompton followed up with a great solo effort, in which he outwitted two opponents and cut in to fire in a terrific shot, but McLaren evoked great cheers with a wonderful save. A scrimmage followed in the Watford goalmouth, but the ball was scrambled away. Half-an-hour had elapsed when Watford took the lead as the result of a clever run by Rattray, and a grand first-time shot by LANE. The outside-right tricked Mackey, and, with plenty of time, studded him, and then transferred the ball very carefully into the middle; Lane met it first time, and Coen had no chance.

ON THE RETREAT

There was a big effort by the Town to get level at once, and Roberts dodged through, and then shot with great power, but Lewis had fallen back and repelled the shot, which would probably have been well wide of McLaren. Watford were forced to fight on the retreat, and it was due to the fine covering of Woodward that the equaliser did not come. Again and again he bobbed up in the goalmouth and headed

or booted the ball away. The Town maintained the upper hand, and in a sharp rush by Smith and the Town left wing, Stephenson bored past the defenders and from near the post turned the ball across goal as McLaren rushed out; Woodward and Martin went for it, and the home captain used his arm to turn the ball past the farther upright. There were loud appeals from the Town players and supporters, and the referee consulted a linesman, but it was the official on the opposite side of the field from the incident, and there was no penalty kick.

BALL DOES IT

Watford came again, but they could not make contact with Coen, and the Town right took up the attack again. Crompton got through and lifted across nicely; McLaren made a big effort to reach the ball, but could only deflect it, and BALL was on the spot and turned it into the net. The referee signalled for the interval as the players came to the centre.

WATFORD	1
LUTON	1

Exchanges were even, but fast and full of menace for either goal, on the re-start. Lowe had a couple of shots which went wide, and Kingham cleared finely after he had given away a free kick. At the other end, McLaren saved nicely when Roberts sent the ball across after a good move on the left, and when Crompton forced a corner and placed the flag kick well, Ball twice tried hard to shoot into the net, but the home defenders covered up well. Mackey stepped into the breach and made a dashing clearance after Thayne had missed the ball, and then the Town centre-half lifted the ball high over his own goal. Two more corners followed, but Kingham brought relief, and the Town re-asserted themselves to some purpose.

SMITH'S DRIVE

The left-wing pair were giving much trouble, and several times Roberts had the opposition in a tangle, but shots were not taken so frequently as they might have been. Stephenson once got through, but landed the ball on the top of the net. Smith won applause for a fine effort when he raced up the field and banged in a shot that was only inches too high, and, following a free kick, Ball headed in, but Brown, almost on the goal-line, kicked away. Martin also had a turn, but Woodward again got in the way.

LOWE RESTORES LEAD

Watford took a turn, but were not particularly dangerous, yet they took the lead as a result of the fine opportunism of Lowe. He and Mackey went for the ball together, and Mackey failed to hold it; LOWE, half-stumbling, secured and shot first time, and the ball went very fast and true just inside the upright. It was the tonic the home side needed. They now pressed very strongly, and threatened again and again to increase their lead. Coen played splendidly and punched out centres and flag kicks, and once evoked a roar of applause by a brilliant save from Devan.

BALL UNLUCKY

There was a sudden spurt up the field, and a fast, bouncing ball was beating Woodward all the way; Ball saw this, and slipped a pass the half-back to gather the ball as it came over, and with a clear run went for goal. He was not outside when the ball was passed, but a linesman flagged, and it was useless for the centre-forward to trick the goalkeeper, as he did. Rattray tried hard to get through, but finished badly, and the Town set up another rousing assault. The forwards were now playing desperately, and Stephenson rushed over to the right, secured and dribbled past three opponents, but the ball just beat him as two opponents came for him when he was on the point of shooting.

MCLAREN THE MASTER

Back again came the Town, and the home defenders found touch in their determination to avoid a goal. Ball, with a beautiful flick paved the way for Martin to dash through and drive hard for goal, but McLaren threw himself sideways, and diverted the ball in miraculous fashion. Then there was a scramble in the home goalmouth as Roberts dropped the ball across, and Crompton darted in and just failed to make proper contact only three yards out. Watford supporters cheered every defensive kick, and the Luton followers urged on their men, and McLaren brought a tumult of applause when he again threw himself across goal, and diverted a magnificent, first-time drive by Roberts, the home players shaking hands with the custodian in their joy.

But the equaliser came, there was a move on the right, in which Colquhoun, Martin, and Crompton each had a part, and the ball was dropped into the middle of the goal. Woodward could not get at it, and as McLaren came out, BALL slipped the ball past him and Martin followed up to make sure, the Luton crowd going nearly mad with excitement, and the Watford supporters being in the depths.

There was but a minute to go, and no further thrill.

TOWN REFERENCE

Coen again did his work remarkably well, and Kingham put up one of his best games, kicking and tackling well. He had not such a strong pair to race as had Mackey, who only revealed his best in spasm. There were times when he slipped the side, but others when he seemed very slow and undecided. There was not the best understanding between the middle line and the back division, either. Thayne did not give Lane a lot of rope, and the home leader had few shots, but the other inside men saw a lot of the ball. Smith did not reveal his best until the second half either, but both he and Colquhoun, by different methods, contrived to give their forwards a lot of the ball, and the latter's co-operation with his wing was exceptionally fine.

CLEVER FORWARDS

As a result Crompton was often in the picture, and played one of his best games. Martin also did well, but the finest inside forward on the field was Roberts. His footwork was faultless, and he turned defence into attack really brilliantly. No forward gave such help to the rear, and yet he was never out of place when there was an attack. Stephenson again played grandly, and had many hot duels with Brown and Findlay, while Ball was as active and as crafty as ever, and, but for the linesman flagging him offside, must have had a "back-trick."

DID MCLAREN SAVE?

McLaren had rather less work than Coen, perhaps, though there was little to it. But he had more difficult work, and a little more luck. Here's a curious thing. In the report above, in all the reports, reference was made to a marvelous save by McLaren from Roberts just before the equalising goal. McLaren says he never touched the ball at all; that it struck the post. Brown and Lewis played soundly at back, though the latter was disposed to get rattled. They did splendid work, but, without Woodward, their task would have been beyond them. The home captain played a great defensive game, very clean, too, and worthy of a captain. His colleagues were hard workers without

being brilliant, and had any amount of pluck and courage.

LIKING FOR LOWE

Of the forwards, I liked Lowe the best. He was the nearest to Roberts in his quickness off the mark, and his distribution, and he also showed a good shot. Rattray was clever, but finished badly as often as not. Devan did bright things, and W. Davies was an effective winger though he had fewer chances than any other winger.

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