

WATFORD WORN DOWN

Luton Town's Magnificent Victory

(By CRUSADER)

WE HAD EAGERLY ANTICIPATED the game between LUTON TOWN and WATFORD and we must have been immensely pleased with the result. The Town fully deserved their success after giving us something of a scare in the first half, and when the whistle brought to an end the hostilities not even the most fervid of the Watford partisans could claim that his side had been unfortunate.

SOMEHOW the game left a rather nasty taste in the mouth, which was a great pity. The blame rested with certain individuals on the Watford side; not all the team, but notable exceptions who had not the spirit to take defeat. If I single out McLaren, it is because his foolish behaviour in the first half was a discredit to any player with his experience, and, although I am usually in sympathy when a player is turned off the field, if ever a man asked for it he did.

LONG AND SHORT of it is that Payne appears to be the butt now of certain defenders with a "stop-him-at-any-price" mind, and the sooner referees are sharp enough to notice this, the better for the safety of the Town player, and the better for the reputations and the pockets of opponents who are disposed to spiteful tricks.

LIVELY ATTACK

WATFORD played splendidly up to a point. I admired the manner in which they set about their difficult task, the forwards especially, for they were continually changing and interchanging position; they had pace, good footwork, and were eager to shoot at the slightest opportunity. After resisting the early attacks of the Town they settled down, and I gave them rather the better of the first half-hour. Actually, until they scored they had been the more hard pressed, the their defence played with confidence and skill, and kept the lines clear.

DEVAN scored an opportunist goal, for with nearly all the Town defenders drawn to the right of their goal, the ball was swung into the middle and Devan hit it first time, to see it sail just inside the post out of Dolman's reach. That was the first goal that had been scored against the Town at Luton since September 12. It looked as if there would be more, too, for the Town defence was not reliable playing against the gusty breeze, and Nelson was suffering from a blow on the face that filled his mouth with blood, and sent him deathly white. Pluckily he remained on the field until half-time, and he had the satisfaction of stemming many strong raids by the visitors, as well as seeing the Town strike back in method similar to the opposition.

BALL'S GRAND GOAL

WATFORD were fortunate to keep the Town from scoring two or three times before BALL did equalise. During one assault McLaren cleared, and Payne was bowled over; as the Town player was on the ground McLaren dropped on him and to all appearances was trying to push his face into the ground. The referee stopped play and had a lengthy lecture for the goalkeeper. Why did he not give a penalty kick if there was a foul? Why did he lecture the goalkeeper if there was not a foul?

IT WAS JUST AFTER this that the Watford goal fell. It did not transpire through any of the persistent attacks. After the Town forwards had been beaten back in a series of assaults Ball snapped up a pass up the middle; tricked the policeman Armstrong, pivoted quickly and drove hard with his right; McLaren flung himself across and managed to touch the ball, but could not arrest it, and into the net it went to the tune of a mighty cheer.

IT WAS A GRAND GOAL, and we could do with many more like it, Mr. Ball. It was medicine, good medicine to the Town, and they attacked hotly again and again without success before the breather.

NELSON'S ENCOURAGING RETURN

THERE WERE DOWNCAST FACES when it was seen that Luton had restarted without Nelson. The Town skipper was having attention in the dressing room. Nevertheless the Town buckled to their business in lively fashion, and Payne put in a shot which brought McLaren lippity lop across goal to push the ball aside. Then Hodge was robbed after trying one move too much. Nelson's return was heralded with a loud cheer, which was multiplied a thousand fold as Finlayson made ground, pushed the ball along the ground and PAYNE raced along through a gap and then crashed it at lightning speed into the net.

WATFORD essayed a come-back, and it required stern and resolute defence to frustrate their efforts, the right wing being very persistent. Gradually, however, the Town came to their best, and the Watford defence had little respite. Their half-backs were forced to battle on the retreat, and with both the Town wings coming into action and showing pace and determination there were exciting scenes in the vicinity of McLaren. During these exchanges there were lively tussles in the Watford goalmouth.

Payne coming in for too much personal attention.

PAYNE AGAIN

IT WAS THE WIT OF NELSON that made the way for the third goal. He deprived Walters and then slanted the ball out to Hodge; the winger made a really delightful pass with the side of his foot, and PAYNE was on the ball and racing through instantaneously, winding up with another crashing drive that had McLaren helpless. McLaren had to make many saves in the next few minutes. Stephenson struck the upright after beating all opposition and driving hard past McLaren.

AND DID THE WELKIN RING? Not half! Ball had more ill-luck, and the Watford goal underwent a minor siege, but was not to fall again immediately. On the other hand, the players showed signs of fatigue, and when that happens football becomes more entertaining, and makes for skilful passing. Dolman was brought into action now and then, but the Town backs gave the visitors little opportunity of getting to close quarters.

AND ONCE MORE

A PENALTY KICK might have been given against O'Brien when he fouled Stephenson, but the referee allowed the winger to persevere, and the ball was whipped over to the right: Ball nodded it down to PAYNE'S feet, and the latter slipped through and then placed the ball out of McLaren's reach for the fourth goal. Again there should have been a penalty kick, this time against Reed for a foul on Payne, but the referee placed the ball outside the penalty area for the kick and the danger was cleared. However, the Town were well on top, and so remained to the end of what I called right in the opening paragraph—hostilities.

TROUBLESOME BREEZE

I ATTRIBUTED THE UNEASINESS of the Town defence in the first half to the troublesome wind. The ball was very difficult to control, and it was up in the air a lot too much. Watford would have done better, perhaps, if several of their players had kept their heads, and I hope we get another referee for the return game—an official who will be alive to things that are likely to happen as well as to those that occur within his vision. On the technical side Mr. Wright was good, but there was a lot happening behind his back, apparently because he trusted players to behave themselves.

SOME PEOPLE were inclined to say that Watford's goal was lucky; it was well gained, and during that particular period deserved on the run of the play, just as were Luton's when theirs came. The Watford defence was rugged rather than clever. McLaren is a good goalkeeper, but worse than unwise, and any kudos that must be given to him is tainted with the reminder of his foolhardiness.

WATFORD'S DEFENCE

I LIKED O'BRIEN MUCH, and Woodward was as good until he seemed to tire in the second half. The former kicks well, and is speedy, and very strong in tackling. Woodward has less dash, but sound ideas. Armstrong was a plodder, and let me say here a very fair player all through. Morgan did good work, so did Reed, but of the latter one must say much the same as of McLaren. He deserved a "talking-to."

THE WATFORD FORWARDS were as good as, if not better, than any other part of the team. Davies was not so prominent as I expected, not more so than Tinklin, but the inside forwards, Barnett and Devan, were very good. Barnett, I think is good enough for any team as he played in the first half. I think he must have been affected by the frayed tempers of some of his colleagues. I like him. Walters was a worker, always striving, if inclined to get a bit annoyed when he was beaten.

THE TOWN

DOLMAN did very good work when it was needed. Mackey improved after a rather shaky opening, and in the second half was a grand defender. Smith was reliable as ever. Now and then I thought each of them had to cover too big a space before making a tackle, but they kicked well and had opponents covered nicely. Nelson played under difficulties, but was again a tower of strength, while Finlayson, apart from lifting the ball too much in the first half, and Fellowes were splendid. The latter was at his very best; a really grand half both in attack and defence, and the work he got out of his left wing in the second half was a potent factor in the grinding down of Watford's defence.

THERE WAS NO OUTSTANDING FORWARD. All played well. Payne may have the limelight because he got another hat-trick, but he would be the first to pay testimony to his mates. Roberts and Stephenson were again a lively combination, as were Hodge and Payne, while Ball's restlessness lured Armstrong from the middle of the defensive lines and made gaps for Payne. One word to John

(Continued in next column)

Ball especially. Let us have some more shooting. It was a grand goal, and there should be more like it. None deserved more to have a good mark, and no goal was better than this from the centre-forward.

LUTON TOWN 4
WATFORD 1

LUTON: Dolman; Mackey, Smith; Finlayson, Nelson, Fellowes; Hodge, Payne, Ball, Roberts, Stephenson.
WATFORD: McLaren; O'Brien, Woodward; Morgan, Armstrong, Reed; Davies (W), Barnett, Walters, Devan, Tinklin.
Referee: J. H. Wright, Derby.