

Luton Punch Carries The Day

WATFORD'S FORWARD FAILING AGAIN

By W. F. SMITH (Sports Editor)

Watford 1, Luton Town 3

MAKING more use of their chances than their opponents could—for Watford had a majority of the scoring opportunities—Luton took a great stride forward in the hectic Third Division promotion race.

A record crowd for the Vicarage-road ground of 27,461 (receipts £1,542) saw a grand game—90 minutes of thrilling football, played in a sporting spirit that did credit to both sides. Fouls there were, inevitably, but the offences were practically all merely technical; and you must realise that this was not only a game between the keenest of rivals, but one between promotion candidates into the bargain.

Much of the football in this match was of Second Division quality. I think that Luton are good enough to realise their ambition . . . and I think that if Watford had two forwards of the Payne and Dawes calibre they would "walk" into the upper circle.

Luton had the drive, punch—call it what you will—that made their attacks so much more menacing than those of their rivals. And, moreover, they had a physical advantage—no mean asset on a holding ground.

Payne's leadership had a telling effect as the game wore on. He had to move away from the centre very often to shake off the persevering Armstrong, who did a difficult job with considerable credit to himself.

On His Trail

Still, Payne's "wanderings" generally led to a scattering of the Watford defence on his trail, and so Dawes and Roberts got many shooting opportunities.

If there was a Luton weakness it was at wing half-back, where neither Fellowes nor Finlayson made their passes with the accuracy of the Watford men. There was too much of the "here-you-are-now-get-on-with-it" kicks.

Watford died bravely, but the old forward weakness was apparent again. Fletcher played with great spirit and pluck all through, but his slowness to grasp the possibilities of a situation went against him.

Davies, who had been a doubtful starter owing to a pulled muscle, was far below his best form, and so Barnett—as good as, if not better than, any forward on the field—saw all his clever moves come to naught.

A strong wind that blew from goal to goal had its influence on the run of the game. Watford had its advantage in the first half, and could not turn it to account. For nearly ten minutes they hammered at the Luton goal, and had Nelson and Mackey rather flurried.

Then O'Brien conceded a corner, although play was quite 30 yards from the Watford goal-line. Stephenson's kick would have been cleared by McLaren ninety-nine times out of a hundred for it fell almost under the bar. But the Watford goalkeeper had the sun in his eyes, missed his catch completely, and Payne, standing by the far post, had only to let the ball hit his head to score.

Fletcher's Goal

A nasty jolt for Watford. But their reply came straightaway. Almost from the kick-off they attacked on the right, and Barnett ran outside to centre to the penalty spot. Fletcher made his shot on the turn, to get as pretty a goal as you would wish to see.

This quick recovery seemed likely to spell further trouble for Luton, but in five minutes they were ahead again. Some slack work by the home defence on the right allowed Stephenson to get the ball back to Dawes, whose first-time shot was far out of McLaren's reach.

A 2-1 lead at half-time, with the wind in their favour afterwards, made the game look safe for Luton. They practically made it so when, 14 minutes after the interval, Payne who had wandered to the right, got the ball and, while the Watford defence hesitated in expectation of the whistle for "offside," whipped it into the middle, where Roberts shot fiercely into the net.

Watford: McLaren; O'Brien, Woodward, Morgan, Armstrong, Reed; Jones, Barnett, Fletcher, Davies, Hurst.

Luton Town: Dolman; Macker, Smith; Finlayson, Nelson, Fellowes, Hancock; Dawes, Payne, Roberts, Stephenson.