

Town Beat Watford by Sheer Skill

DEFENCE IN WONDERFUL FORM: FORWARDS' SCINTILLATING WORK

Payne, Dawes and Roberts Hit the Target

(By CHILTERN)

WATFORD 1
Fletcher

LUTON TOWN 3
Payne, Dawes, Roberts

WATFORD.—McLaren; O'Brien, Woodward; Morgan, Armstrong, Reed; Jones, Barnett, Fletcher, Davies (W), Hurst.

LUTON TOWN.—Dolman; Mackey, Smith; Finlayson, Nelson, Fellowes; Hancock, Dawes, Payne, Roberts, Stephenson.

Referee.—I. H. W. Wright, Derby.

There is no stopping the Town these days. After taking three points from away matches with Reading and Bristol City, they added more lustre to their already gilded record by administering a hollow defeat on their near neighbours, Watford.

A crowd that beat the previous record for the ground by over 4,000, saw a typical "Derby" match, played in the proverbial Cup-tie manner, with the honours going to the better footballing side. The attendance was 27,461 (receipts £1,542), and there must have been quite 10,000 Luton supporters present, judging from the cheering of the goals, and from the traffic on the road. In addition to those travelling by road, three special trains left Luton, packed with optimistic enthusiasts.

THRILLS IN PLENTY

I heard the Hatters' supporters expressing themselves vociferously long before the match started, and none of them would even hear of the Town dropping a point. How far the optimism was justified is shown by the result, and two goals did not exaggerate the Town's superiority.

Thrills there were in plenty. There were sufficient in the first quarter of an hour to satisfy the most hungry individual, and though there were a few bleak moments of slack play, the ball was generally moving quickly. Play was always fast, and in view of the troublesome corner to corner wind, some of the football served up was first rate.

The Town always had some end in view for their movements, but much of the home side's work was haphazard, and they trusted to luck more often than to skill.

STORMING BEGINNING

I must except the early stages of the first half, when Watford played such storming football that I was afraid history would repeat itself, and that the Town would find themselves a goal down before they had really settled down to their task. The home forwards were dangerous right from the kick-off, and with the Town defence a little shaky, especially Smith, a goal for Watford did not strain imagination, especially when Fletcher struck the post.

As it happened it was the Town who went ahead, and it must be said that it was against the run of the play at this point. Nevertheless, it was a beautiful goal. It was their first really serious attack, and was started by Dawes and Stephenson.

O'Brien had to give a corner to relieve his lines, and Stephenson placed this accurately. PAYNE once more displayed his knack of turning up in unexpected places, and contrived to keep himself unmarked.

The ball came over; he leaped up, and headed it past McLaren. This was the signal for 10,000 Lutonians to go mad with enthusiasm. This was short-lived, however, for the game had scarcely been restarted when Dolman was picking the ball out of his net.

THE EQUALISER

FLETCHER was the scorer with a clever shot from a pass by Barnett. He found a way through the defence, and though Dolman seemed to touch the ball, he could not stop its progress.

We nearly had another goal in the next minute, for only a superhuman effort by McLaren kept out a brilliant shot from Payne. Then Barnett missed very badly for the home side. The Town forwards attacked again, and a movement begun by Hancock led to the second goal after 15 minutes' play.

The right winger centred to Payne, who pushed the ball out to Stephenson. He was unmarked, and taking his time, crossed for DAWES to meet the ball on the run, and ram it past McLaren. Another explosion from 10,000 throats.

The Watford forwards were still showing liveliness, but the Luton defence was now well on top of its job, and had their opponents better weighed up. Still the home side had only themselves to blame for having been behind at the interval.

WATFORD MISS CHANCES

They had the chances—more chances than did the Town, but failed to make the most of what fortune brought them. On the other hand, the Town forwards had shown splendid opportunism.

Watford lost a lot of their aggressiveness and fighting spirit after the first half hour, and even before then, Luton looked good winners. They were always better together, and there was a grand understanding between each department.

In the second half, with the advantage of the wind, the Town played polished football, and for periods toyed with the opposition. The Watford defence could find no really effective counter to the scintillating work of the opposing forwards.

ROBERTS' GLORIOUS GOAL

Watford's defenders were shaky under pressure, and then tried to play the off-side game, only to find that it did not pay. A few raids by the home team followed, and then Stephenson brought

a gasp from the crowd with a grand drive that hit the cross-bar and bounced over. Payne made the opening, and it was bad luck on the left winger.

The issue was finally clinched after 59 minutes' play, ROBERTS putting on what I considered the best goal of the match. Here again, Payne provided the opportunity. He veered out to the right, beat Woodward, and calmly centred to Roberts. The inside man met the ball as it dropped, and it hit the back of the rigging before McLaren knew what was happening.

There was no doubt as to which way the game would end after this, and though Watford made desperate efforts, they met a solid front, and the few shots that did reach Dolman were smartly dealt with.

Meanwhile the Town forwards put in more sparking work, and Dawes weaved his way through to centre for Stephenson to net again. However, the point was disallowed on the grounds of offside.

It was a very near thing, and my opinion was that he was on-side. He was always running on to the ball, but the referee and linesman were in position, and as I have no other criticism of Mr. Wright's work, I shall leave it at that.

END WAS TOO SOON

The closing stages brought a number of corners to Watford, and the number of flag kicks they had during the game was really surprising. Dolman made one sensational save from a header by Davies, but apart from that, his task was light.

Then came a curious incident. The referee blew his whistle for full time, five minutes before the end. It appears that his watch had stopped, and he misunderstood a signal from the linesman. The mistake was soon rectified, and the remaining time was played.

So another tussle with old rivals ended in favour of Luton. There was no question about the worthiness of their win, for Watford were out-manoeuvred, if not outplayed. The Town always impressed as the more skilful side, and Watford seemed to throw science to the winds midway through the first half.

KICK AND RUSH

Much of their work was of the kick and rush variety, but they could blame weak finishing by their forwards as much as anything else for their defeat. There was a definite lack of punch in their front line, and the inside men were almost completely subdued after that terrific start.

Jones was the most dangerous member of the line, and little was done with his centres.

The Town defence was again right at the top of its form, and if I have to single any out for special mention, it will have to be Mackey and Nelson.

They were both magnificent. Mackey gave Hurst a thin time, and it was infrequently that the winger was able to get the ball across. Mackey simply would not give him room in which to work, and his tackling was ruthless, and always fair. Kicking a splendid length, and always showing fine judgment, he was one of the heroes of a great victory. His enthusiasm is tremendous.

NELSON'S HEAD

Nelson also played a big part in the win by his thorough subjection of Fletcher. After his goal the centre forward could never really escape the attentions of the tall centre-half, who also found time to mark Davies and Barnett. Many centres were met by Nelson's head, and sent well out of harm's way. It was indeed a great display.

Smith was little behind his colleagues, and, after a shaky spell, settled down to play solidly. He had some trouble with Jones, but gave him very little rope, and there was nothing half-hearted about his tackling.

Finlayson and Fellowes were grand spoilers. They worked tremendously hard from start to finish, and broke up many attacks. Both were grafters of the first grade, and were never afraid to bring the ball up the field. They gave good support to the men in front, and both could be thoroughly well satisfied with their parts.

Dolman was "safe as houses," and his catching of the ball was sometimes uncanny.

DOLMAN'S CONFIDENCE

Several of his clearances brought roars of applause, and he can congratulate himself on being beaten once only. The goalkeeper has got over his bad patch, and is playing with increased confidence and skill. He was never flustered, no matter how heavy the pressure, and this department did not lose by comparison with any other in the team.

I was pleased to see Roberts and Dawes among the goals, and it is good to see all three inside men appearing in the goal-scoring list. Roberts and Dawes were the ideal schemers and prompters, and he was always doing useful things. His speed was his big asset, and he was unlucky not to score a couple of goals.

He is showing his old skill in approach work, and much of his footwork was grand. It was for his marksmanship that he was famed at Crystal Palace, and he showed that he can still hit the net by taking another goal. He and Hancock again showed clever combination which perplexed the left flank of the Watford defence.

HANCOCK IN FINE FORM

Hancock played a beautiful game. He is becoming the complete winger. Fast, nippy, and ever ready to cut in, he was a constant source of danger. He beat

Woodward time and again in a remarkably short space, and his centres were splendidly placed. On this showing there is no need to worry about the extreme right position.

Payne led the line wonderfully well, and his unselfishness was one of the main features of his game. He had a hand in all three goals, and Armstrong simply could not cope with him.

Joe was always on the go, chasing everything everywhere. Apart from this, he showed real skill, and his flicks to the wings, and to his inside men were delightful. I have not seen a better exhibition of centre forward play this season.

THE LEFT WING

Roberts was always in the thick of the fight, and his goal was a gem. The wind took some of his long passes astray, but he was always working the ball well, and making openings for his colleagues.

Stephenson could not be left for a minute, as O'Brien found to his cost, and the latter appears to be settling down now.

This glorious win has brought Second Division football a step nearer, and if this form can be reproduced consistently—I seem to be saying this fairly regularly—then the Town need fear no opposition. Watford were plucky fighters, but had not the skill nor the power in attack of the Town.