

HANDICAPPED TOWN WENT DOWN AGAIN

Groves's Serious Injury Upset Their Rhythm

WALSALL 2, LUTON TOWN 0 61/62

DESPITE another forward re-shuffle which resulted in three members of last Saturday's attack, Chandler, McGuffie and Fleming, losing their places, the Town failed to score for the fourth consecutive time in their Boxing Day match at Walsall.

However, despite that fact and another defeat, their fourth in succession, there was a marked improvement in their display and they had an alibi in that Groves damaged an arm in the third minute, and, for the remainder of the game, was almost a passenger on the left wing, with the arm strapped to his side.

A doctor examined him and suspected either a broken or chipped bone, but allowed him to carry on.

In a way, this was a fortunate happening for Jardine, who came in unexpectedly to make his debut in a League match, because he moved to inside-left and emerged as the Town's best forward.

Holding the ball intelligently, he also used it well, and this fact may be a pointer for the future in view of the Town's current shortage of inside men.

Conditions on the hard, frozen pitch were bad in the extreme and Walsall adapted themselves better to them.

While the Town tried to make progress by keeping the ball close

and trying to play cultured football, Walsall thumped it hard and followed up strongly and it turned out that these were the tactics most likely to succeed.

Even so, the Town worked out some scoring openings, but their finishing was not quite crisp enough to take full advantage of them, and there was always the handicap of the injury to Groves.

WILSON, the former Nottingham Forest centre-forward, who played against the Town in the Cup Final, put Walsall into the lead from close range five minutes from half-time, with Baynham having absolutely no chance.

McKECHNIE MISSED CHANCE

Best opportunity the Town had of drawing level came near the end when McKechnie jiggled through the home defence to leave himself with only Boswell to beat, but he delayed his shot a fraction too long and the goalkeeper risked injury by hurling himself at the inside-right's feet and smothering the ball.

Had McKechnie scored, it would have been a spectacular solo effort and would almost certainly have saved the Town a point.

However, they did not have another opportunity and, five minutes from the end, **WILSON** made victory certain for the home team with a goal which the Town hotly disputed.

They held that Wilson was off-side and that Cope had been fouled, but the referee did not agree. Cope, indeed, was stunned by the heaviness of his fall on the ground and had to have attention before he could continue.

One pleasing thing that this game did reveal was more fighting spirit from the Town team than was evident on Saturday, and it is a pity that injuries look likely to prevent this formation from settling down.

There was more assurance from the attack with Ashworth leading it with plenty of dash, though he is still tending to have to turn around with the ball which rather held up things.

McKechnie played some clever football and there was a fair amount of directness from Walden, whose finishing was not consistent, however.

Again, the defence had to carry a heavy burden, because there were periods of heavy pressure by Walsall, but they kept fighting and there was a tremendous amount of work by Morton, who made a successful return to the team, and Pacey.

Cope was another who never gave up the battle, but he tended to be beaten in the air by Wilson, who has always been more than useful in this direction.

McNally was the better full-back and just about qualified for the tag of the best full-back on view, but the star of the defence was Baynham.

Showing a return to all his old confidence, he made a series of thrilling saves and held up the Walsall attack time and again.

If Baynham can maintain this form, then one of the Town's immediate problems has been solved, and this display should do him the world of good.

Walsall are not a brilliant side, but they kept going all the time and were always attempting to make ground by the shortest possible route.

WALSALL: Boswell; Sharples, Gutteridge; Hill, McPherson, Dudley; Meek, Hogkisson, Wilson, Richards, Taylor.

LUTON TOWN: Baynham; McNally, Bramwell; Morton, Cope, Pacey; Walden, McKechnie, Ashworth, Groves, Jardine.

Referee: K. R. Tuck, Chesterfield. Attendance: 9,609.