



O'Rourke loses his balance as he tries to volley a pass from the right wing into the Watford goal.

LUTON'S FEARS DISPELLED

Luton 2, Watford 1

By JOHN THICKNESSE

WATFORD led from the 55th minute until the 82nd at Kenilworth-road yesterday, and lost their theoretical chance of promotion only when O'Rourke, the Luton centre-forward, scored his second goal two minutes from time.

Though it looked highly suspect, and Watford appealed with gusto, the news of Coventry's victory a half-hour later made its authenticity, as far as they were concerned, a point of academic interest only. For Luton, the goal was vital, for it dispelled their last fears of relegation.

Considering what was at stake this was an appalling game for the last 20 minutes when, on a heavy ground, both sides were as near dead as makes no difference.

In the first half there was some acceptable football, notably from Luton. With Reid and Lownds dominant in midfield and the young, spritely O'Rourke pulverising Chung in the penalty area, it became easy to understand how their last eight games have yielded 14 points.

Languid ease

From the post-Wembley ruins of 1959, in which time they have dropped from the First Division to the brink of the Fourth, the signs of a lasting revival are here for all to see.

Watford were led with energy by Livesey, but, apart from Owen and Jennings, who handles the fastest shot with a languid ease, they played without inspiration. Whatever their supporters may think, they are well out of the Second Division.

Luton should have had a penalty in the 22nd minute, when O'Rourke accelerated through the defence and

was tripped from behind, and were unlucky to go behind when Harris, 10 minutes after half-time, turned Spelman's low, left-wing centre inside the near post.

By then Luton had missed so many many half chances that it had begun to look unlikely that they could equalise but when Livesey conceded Watford's 14th free kick eight minutes from time, they unexpectedly did so.

Pacey and Smith helped on McBain's lob and O'Rourke ran it home, well wide of Jennings. Six minutes later he concluded a fearsome goalmouth scramble with the winner, his 21st in 22 games.

At 19, O'Rourke looks a very fine player in the making. Chelsea let him go for nothing and you can form your own conclusions.

Luton: Baynham; McBain, Bramwell; Pacey, Fincham, Lownds; Turner, Smith, O'Rourke, Reid, Whittaker.

Watford: Jennings; Nicholas, Jones; Crisp, Chung, Owen; Spelman, McAnearney, Livesey, Oliver, Harris.

Referee: F. Schofield (Morecambe).