

HARRIS HAT-TRICK HAD TOWN IN TROUBLE

Their Gallant Fight Was Not Enough

By CHILTERN

LUTON TOWN 2, WATFORD 4

AFTER the appalling start of being two goals down in 14 minutes, the Town, with a great show of determination, got themselves off the hook at Kenilworth-road on Saturday.

By four minutes from half-time they had drawn level, but with seconds remaining, Watford went ahead again and there was never really the prospect of them making a second comeback.

Their troubles began in the third minute when HARRIS, who was destined to complete a first-half hat-trick, took advantage of a pass by McAnearney with the Town defence standing still, and glided the ball in from close range.

Watford looked dangerous, and Baynham made a great one-fisted save from Saunders, who, however, was the architect of the second goal after 14 minutes when he foxed the Town defenders by allowing a cross by Owen to run on and HARRIS was there to snap up another chance.

In the face of some heavy tackling on the hard surface, the Town fought back and Whittaker was unlucky when he cracked the ball into the corner of the net seconds after the referee had awarded the Town a free-kick for a foul on McKechnie.

With the ball lively and bouncing at awkward heights and angles, there were perhaps more fouls than would have been the case in different going, but there was certainly a tough approach by Watford which caused a series of free-kicks to be awarded against them.

However, the Town persevered and with 28 minutes gone, RIDDICK scored a glorious goal with a hard-hit drive following a through pass by Pacey.

At that stage, the Town were having more of the play and pressing Watford back on the defensive so that it was no real surprise when they drew level four minutes from half-time when the referee ruled that a shot by WHITTAKER had crossed the line before Chung was able to clear.

What presaged this success was some clever work by Riddick and Pleat, but the Town enjoyed the feeling of having gained a reprieve for only three minutes because, with a minute before the interval, Pleat committed an

unnecessary foul and, from the free-kick, which crossed the goal inside the six yards line, HARRIS was on hand again to do the necessary.

Early in the second half, Jardine received a kick in the face which necessitated him going off for a few minutes and Watford, confident again, increased their lead after 54 minutes when McANEARNEY scored from close in after Baynham had failed to cut out a centre by Saunders.

Badly, at that stage, the Town needed another goal and it nearly came when a shot by Pacey scraped the top of the bar and again from two corners by Pleat which Whittaker might have converted had he not been badly handicapped by a recurrence of groin muscle trouble.

Then, Goy made a tremendous, diving save from a long shot by Fincham but, in the main, Watford were content to funnel back into deep defensive positions and hold on to their considerable advantage.

Not that the Town had the best of luck in their efforts because just before the end, Riddick suffered a similar experience to that of Pacey and saw his drive go over off the woodwork.

WEAKNESSES

Despite the fact that fortune did not run their way, the Town gave a disappointing showing and there were too many weaknesses.

With Fincham slow on the turn, there was too often a gap down the middle and McBain never seemed to be able to keep tabs on Harris who was allowed to wander almost at will and did so with deadly effect.

Jardine was more successful against Owen, but the most impressive member of the defence was Reid who had his best game since his conversion from inside-left.

Compared with his Bristol display, there was improvement from Pacey, though he did not show the authority he can, while Baynham, not seeming to relish the conditions did not compare favourably with Goy, who took full command of his penalty area.

His dominance and that which Chung achieved over the hard-working McKechnie, were major factors in the Watford success and, generally speaking, their tactics were better suited to the difficult conditions.

Whittaker's effectiveness was cut down by his injury, and Furphy, with a wealth of experience behind him, had a firm grip on Pleat, who again tended to do too much.

Best of the forwards, undoubtedly, was Riddick, despite a partial fade-out in the second half, and although Rioch did a few bright things, it is becoming obvious that he has been rushed into League football prematurely.

LUTON TOWN: Baynham; McBain, Jardine; Pacey, Fincham, Reid; Pleat, Riddick, McKechnie, Rioch, Whittaker.

WATFORD: Goy; Burgess, Furphy; Welbourne, Chung, Houghton; Owen, McAnearney, Saunders, Anderson, Harris.

Referee: A. R. C. Weller, Bromley. Attendance: 11,020.

WHAT THE OTHER CRITICS SAID

Luton 2, Watford 4.

"Luton seemed to be on their knees when Harris put Watford two up in 14 minutes, but they recovered and had drawn level through Riddick and Whittaker shortly before the interval.

"But before they had had time to appreciate their position they were again in arrears when Harris completed his hat-trick seconds before half-time." — "Sunday Telegraph."

"Watford adopted the right tactics for a hard ground. They continually pushed high balls down the middle and George Harris snapped up two chances in the first 15 minutes to put them right on top in this local derby.

"Luton were slow to learn the lesson. But when they did Gordon Riddick and Ray Whittaker levelled matters. Luton's joy was not long-lived, however, for Harris completed his hat-trick just on the interval. Jim McAnearney got the fourth in the 57th minute." — "News of the World."

"First blood went to Watford in this local clash, and deservedly so. And it will be surprising if Luton survive the return tomorrow, for Watford always had the edge.

"From the moment they snatched a two-goal lead through left-winger George Harris inside 15 minutes, Watford looked the masters. Harris got his hat-trick before half-time." — "The People."

"The ability of left-winger George Harris to spot an opening helped Watford to humble Luton in a robust 'derby' game. Most of the excitement came in the first half.

"Watford scored twice in the first 15 minutes, then Luton staged a come-back to draw level, only for Watford to get in front again with the last kick of the half." — "Sunday Mirror."

"Rocked by two George Harris goals in the first 14 minutes, Luton staged a rip-roaring rally. First Gordon Riddick blasted in a great shot and then Ray Whittaker put them level with a shot that the referee decided had crossed the line before Sammy Chung scooped it away.

"But with seconds remaining of the first half, Harris, who wandered inside with deadly effect, completed a memorable hat-trick after a free kick for an unnecessary foul by David Pleat." — "Sunday Express."

Watford 2, Luton 0.

"Five minutes from time centre-forward Ron Saunders made the game safe for Watford, which was scant reward for a determined defensive battle by Luton.

"Watford, hoping to find the gaps they exploited at Kenilworth-road on Saturday had not been plugged, were surprised. Saunders's goal clinched Watford's second double of the season, but there was little between the two sides in the first half." — "Daily Mail."

"Ron Saunders returned to scoring form with an 85th minute goal to clinch Watford's second double of the long season. Watford repeated the passing tactics which gave them a 4-2 win at Luton on Saturday, but this time they had to fight much harder for victory.

"Luton wing-halves Dave Pacey and Mark Lownds were outstanding in a defence that kept the Watford attack in close check." — "Daily Express."