

Promotion hopes are still alive

By ERIC PUGH

69/69

A GREAT crowd of 25,223—the biggest for over ten years—saw the Town winners of a tough, exciting and often sensational local derby at Kenilworth Road last night. It was an occasion full of incidents both on and off the field. Both teams played the last 40 minutes with only ten men after Slough (Luton) and Endean had been sent off. Watford's Walley received his marching orders with six minutes left.

At that stage the Town looked to be going towards a comfortable victory with goals from Buxton and Allen, but Scullion turned the game upside down with a goal five minutes from the end.

So the Town keep their faint hope of promotion alive while Watford still have to wait for a point to give them the title.

After the match it was stated there had been 37 hospital cases, including seven fractures and one spinal injury.

LUTON TOWN: Read; Dougan, Bannister; Keen, Slough, Moore; French, Lewis, Buxton, Allen, Rioch. Substitute: Branston.

WATFORD: Walker; Welbourne, Williams; Eddy, Lees, Walley; Scullion, Hale, Sinclair, Endean, Owen. Substitute: Garbett.

Referee: K Burns, of Stourbridge.

Watford caused some surprise by leaving out Terry Garbett, switching Scullion to outside-right, and bringing in Owen on the left.

With a big crowd packing the terraces, the atmosphere was tense and well before the game began, three young fans behind the Oak Road goal were yanked out by police and escorted out of the ground.

Dougan lost the toss which would not worry him unduly, since the Town were set to attack their favourite Oak Road goal.

After a couple of Town raids had been driven off, there was more than a hint of over anxiety on the part of Moore when he gave away a corner haphazardly to stop Endean.

Ambulance men were being kept busy dealing with casualties behind the Oak Road goal, and I understand that the gates to the enclosure were closed half an hour before the start, but those to other parts of the ground were not.

There was an escape for Watford when Buxton all but got a touch to a low centre from French, and Eddy just got there first to concede a corner.

First casualty was Lewis who went down after a clash with Welbourne but made a quick recovery.

At last there came a shot on the target from Keen after Buxton had contributed a clever touch. The ball bobbed through fairly awkwardly off the hard pitch to Walker.

Walker was being kept busier than Read, without having been severely tested yet, though he had some difficulty in fisting away a high lob from Keen with Lewis, who was penalised for a foul, in close attendance.

VITAL GOAL

Then in the 28th minute pandemonium broke out when the Town took the lead through BUXTON, whose first League goal this season it was.

It was a brilliantly taken effort and the chance came when the ball ran loose after Lewis had tangled with two Watford defenders, after Buxton had headed it to him.

Buxton made no bones about grasping his opportunity, and his first-time drive flew into the corner of the

net, well out of Walker's reach.

There was an exodus from the Oak Road terrace, superintended by a large force of police, and there was now a large overflow inside the wall on the running track.

The Town were still calling the tune, and Walker did well at full-length to cut out a dangerous low centre by Rioch, who had rounded Welbourne.

ON TOP

Without doubt, the Town were much the more dangerous, and a brilliant through pass by Buxton, who was laying the ball off well, gave Lewis a chance to test Walker which he did with an awkward low drive.

Then Endean fouled Lewis, who from Bannister's free-kick, shot through a crowd of players, so that Walker was only just able to scoop the ball off the goal-line.

With the Town surging back again, Welbourne was glad enough to relieve the pressure by kicking into touch.

Towards half-time, Watford were seen in a slightly better light, not that it amounted to much so far as a threat to the Town goal was concerned, and Read was still awaiting his first severe test.

Quite the most dangerous situation developed when Keen was penalised for a foul on Scullion, only about a foot outside the penalty area.

It looked a bit harsh on the right-half, but it might have been a serious turn for the Town, because Endean's shot went through, only to finish wide of the far post. Half-time:

LUTON TOWN 1
WATFORD 0

There was still trouble of various sorts behind the Oak Road goal. Casualties, which at half-time I was told were of a minor nature were still being taken off the ground, and the start of the second-half was delayed.

Then came a loudspeaker announcement that if those who had been allowed inside the boundary walls did not sit down, the referee would take the players off the field.

When play did get under way, Watford had their substitute, Garbett, on for Owen, and he was obviously destined to be a double spearhead with Endean, who was the first to have a shot, one made on the volley, which rose too high.

TWO SENT OFF

Then came the first real trouble on the field, when Slough and Endean were involved in a wrestling match, which ended with both players being booked five minutes after the resumption . . . and sent off.

Things were now tending to get out of hand, and there was another clash between Walley and Dougan, after which the referee waved a finger at both, but took no further action.

The departure of Slough meant that Moore took over in the middle.

The tough tackling continued, and Rioch had to have attention after being laid low by Walley.

At the start of the half, Watford looked much improved in attack, but now the re-organised Town defence seemed to have their measure.

Rioch, again being given the freedom to wander, made a worthy attempt to increase the Town's lead when he beat Williams cleverly, and Walker just managed to beat out his fierce drive.

In their snap raids, the Town were still the more dangerous, and it needed a brilliant, one-handed save by Walker to prevent Buxton from adding goal number two after Rioch sent him through.

The corner that resulted led to the Town getting their second goal after 69 minutes

How the goals came

ALLEN for Luton after 69 minutes.

BUXTON for Luton after 28 minutes.

SCULLION for Watford after 85 minutes.

through ALLEN, who splendidly timed his header from Lewis's cross, to flash the ball into the net.

Watford came back with some determination to be right out of luck when Hale produced a terrific drive that crashed against a post, and the ball was finally scrambled away.

Allen's goal had the merit of bringing the Town's goal average exactly level with that of Swindon, who held a watching brief in the shape of their manager, Danny Williams, and three directors.

For Buxton this was proving a splendid finale to his career with the Town, and he again went near to scoring with a header that Walker just kept out.

Then came more trouble. Walley was sent off the field for a foul on Lewis, six minutes from the end.

In the 85th minute a bad mistake by Dougan in attempting a back pass to Read let in SCULLION to score easily and renew the Watford hopes. Again there was a hold-up while the pitch was cleared.

RESULT:

LUTON TOWN 2
WATFORD 1