

Watford outclassed by Town

WATFORD 0, LUTON TOWN 1

WHATEVER the Watford chief, Ken Furphy, chose to think about this affair, and he was telling a posse of Pressmen afterwards that Watford had had too much of the play and too many chances to have lost, the plain fact was that there was a big difference in the class of these teams.

Giving what manager Alec Stock usually describes as "a thoroughly professional performance," they always seemed to know exactly what they were doing and there was every evidence that they were following the dictates of a pre-arranged plan.

On the other hand, Watford were haphazard and lacking in understanding and cohesion, but their major failing was at close quarters where they were entirely short of striking power.

Much of their shortage of punch could be traced to the supreme covering of the Town defence. Whenever a gap appeared, it was filled rapidly, and comparatively few shots got through to Read.

On the other hand, the goalkeeper added to his reputation when Wigg, midway through the second half, was left with as good a chance as came Watford's way, but he went full length to pull off a great save.

Not that it was all defence by the Town, because

By ERIC PUGH

and steer it firmly into the net.

Afterwards, Furphy said that the ball went in off the back of Keen's head, which the player himself completely denied, and there was never any doubt in my mind that this was a perfectly-timed effort.

After this the Town moved with more assurance and confidence in attack, allowing it to be reinforced on occasions, and there seemed reasonable grounds for their appeals for a penalty when MacDonald was brought down from behind by Lees.

Chance

What was almost Watford's only clear-cut chance of the first half fell to Walley from a corner, award of which had been disputed, but from a good position he glanced the ball wide with his head.

Towards the interval there was some quite intensive Town pressure, which served to expose some limitations in the home defence.

Not that this was a match that ever promised to produce a crop of goals and there was evidence of Watford thinking along these lines when, in the 70th minute, Welbourne came on for Lugg, and Garbett was pushed up as a striker.

There was also a switch of wings for Scullion, a clever winger who always promised more than he achieved and he did not have any more success against the formidable John Ryan than he had had against the sound Bannister.

As the game was entering its final phase, the Town had a clear case of a penalty denied them when Packer blatantly handled in preventing a centre from Jimmy Ryan reaching Givens. Both the referee and a linesman were on the spot, without seeing anything untoward.

In the face of this handicap, Givens was not so effective as he usually is and it was left to Jimmy Ryan to be the most dangerous second string striker to MacDonald and he fought for every ball.

There was also some auxiliary support at times from Court who had a good match and now seems to have settled down in a role that was somewhat foreign to him when he arrived here.

Once again, there was superb control and generalship in midfield from Keen, who played a real captain's part in that he was thoroughly in command from start to finish.

Another great display came from Nicholl, who broke up attack after attack and completely dominated the middle, with the help of Slough, who has so capably taken over the mantle of Moore.

Bannister has taken his chance with great alacrity as everyone knew he would once he was required for service in the senior side and John Ryan continues to impress as the most improved young right-back in the business.

As a spectacle, the game fell far short of expectations and as Stock said afterwards, "These local derby matches have a habit of being disappointing. However, from our point of view, we gained what we came for and these are a very handy couple of points."

WATFORD: Walker; Butler, Packer; Garbett, Lees, Eddy; Scullion, Wigg, Lugg (Welbourne), Walley, Woods.

LUTON TOWN: Read; John Ryan, Bannister; Hoy (Collins), Nicholl, Slough; Jimmy Ryan, Court, MacDonald, Keen, Givens.

Referee: D. J. Lyden, Birmingham.

Attendance: 24,456.

In the net

KEEN for Luton after 28 minutes.

they made a habit of the quick break into attack with MacDonald spearheading it, and with rather less support than usually comes his way, often having to fight a lone battle.

Keen scores

At the same time, Watford's defence could never afford to relax in the slightest when he was making for goal and it was he who sparked off the move that led to the all-important goal after 28 minutes.

He made ground quickly down the left wing, being stopped only by the concession of a corner, which proved fatal to the home side.

Jimmy Ryan placed his in-swing with deadly accuracy and KEEN used his height to the full in jumping to make contact with the ball

Hoy injury

Certainly, another goal at that point would have been useful, but there never seemed to be any real danger of the Town losing their slender lead. In fact, they nearly added to it when a shot from MacDonald almost slipped under Walker's body as the goalkeeper went down to save.

castle United inside-man Albert Bennett (5), who is out of the side at the moment. In fact, there has been talk of an impending return for him to Rotherham United, the club with whom he came to the fore. Other member of the front three is Trevor Howard, who was born in King's Lynn and was snapped up from local football.