

LUTON HAVE TO PAY THE PRICE

Watford 0 Luton Town 1

LUTON TOWN beat their neighbours Watford with breath to spare on Saturday. But they have to pay the price. Both Don Givens and Roger Hoy were crocked and afterwards Town manager Alec Stock told me: "It looks as if we have lost them for a week or two."

Mr Stock said he almost pulled Givens off at half-time, but decided to keep going. It was just as well he did because Hoy finally succumbed to the pulled thigh muscle that has troubled him for a couple of weeks, and had to limp off before the end.

He could hardly walk. And Givens was not much better. Afterwards he said: "It is that knee again. It went early in the match and I was always struggling. It's a darned nuisance. I just can't seem to shake it off."

Imperative

It now becomes imperative that John Moore shakes off his niggling leg injury before next week's visit to Norwich.

The reserves play Peterborough on Tuesday afternoon, and I expect him to use this as a pointer to the weekend.

Saturday's match was a dismal derby, with Luton content to hold Watford's insipid attack at arm's length.

Watford had about as much to offer on the field as their directors did in the board room, where hospitality to the visiting press, who are traditionally invited in for a chat, was nil.

The home side started brightly enough, but they never got their second wind,

and when Mike Keen headed in Jimmy Ryan's corner in the 28th minute, Watford crumbled.

Luton took over in midfield where Keen and Court were superb, but they bothered little about attack — which was a bit disturbing for the thousands of fans who had travelled to cheer them on.

Jimmy Ryan did well, but he played a right-wing role and while always able to beat the sluggish Packer, his centres often went begging for want of troops in the middle.

But Luton did enough. As Mr Stock said: "I am very grateful for two points. That's all we came for."

Watford manager Ken Furphy commented: "We had too much of the ball to lose. We had four chances to Luton's two."

I don't entirely agree with that. I presume Mr Furphy is calling those long-range efforts of Walley chances? The ones he slapped high and wide.

Mr Furphy also thought that Keen's goal hit the back of his head and bounced in!

But however long you sit and think about it, it's impossible to write this match up as a needle thriller. There was plenty of enthusiasm, but it was never harnessed, and the whole thing was a bit of a bore.

Luton played it tight on the edge of the penalty area, which was usually about as far as they allowed Watford to trespass. Chriss Nicholl was again dominant in the middle of the back four, and I thought Slough had an outstanding match. With Bannister looking as if he's never been out of the side and John Ryan

dogged and determined, there was an air of "Thou shalt not pass" about the Town's last line of resistance.

Court had one of his best matches for Luton, and I couple him with Mike Keen for the man of the match award.

For Watford, Wigg and Lugg looked lively in patches, but Walley and Scullion usually contrived to do something wrong to spoil a promising start.

Busy week

Welbourne was brought on for Lugg for some reason, and John Collins took over for Hoy near the end.

Luton now have to concentrate on their injuries, and physio Reg Game is in for a busy week. It looks as if there will be places for Moore and Busby at Norwich as Luton battle to take over the Second Division leadership before the holiday.

As for Watford, they really have a problem. Apart from seeming to lack ideas, they often tend to get in each other's way. There is a lack of discipline about the side.

If they want to keep their diminishing crowds they will have to work something out.

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

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

Referee — Mr Danny Lyden (Birmingham).

Attendance — 24,456.

Goal: Keen (Luton 28 min).

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Ron Wigg was one of the biggest threats to Luton in the local derby that everyone had been looking forward to and in the picture (centre left) he still manages to get in a fierce right-footed drive, despite the close attention given to him by Town centre-half Chris Nicholl.