

DERBY DELIGHT

Watford sunk by a tactical switch

WHILE SUPPORTERS were celebrating the best local derby win for 45 years, Luton Town manager David Pleat showed the detachment and clinical determination to seek perfection which must make him a First Division manager one day.

To most Town fans, victory over Watford — and this was the fifth in a row — is only slightly less welcome than promotion and a win on the pools.

Mr Pleat is most certainly a Luton Town fan. And he did very much enjoy the fact that his best win of the season, and the Town's best team performance, came against the local rivals. What's more, Mr Pleat's pre-match tactical planning made it all possible.

But while a lot of us felt like dancing and singing, he made a point which should worry managers much further afield than Vicarage Road: "I know we're second in the table, and that this was a good win, and well-deserved."

"But really we've done nothing yet, and we can play better. So far we have hinted that we can do good things. Perhaps against Watford we suggested it more strongly."

Watford boss Graham Taylor baffled the Press-room with science. If his team played half as well as he talks they will be in the European Cup Final in a couple of years.

His problem was that

**REPORT BY BRIAN SWAIN
PICTURES: MARK RICHARDS**

The Town skipper had the game was all over by half-time, when the Town were three-up and cruising. But, surprisingly, they weren't taken in when Mr Pleat tried to persuade them over the half-time tea that they had to go out and imagine it was 0-0 and start all over again.

Why should they? Watford had been destroyed, with their 100 per cent away record as shattered as their morale.

Mr Taylor paid brief tribute to the Town's skills, and then explained at some length that if the Watford supporters wanted someone to blame he was the guilty party.

He used teenagers Nigel Callaghan and John Barnes as midfield flank men, and the unfortunate youngsters just about vanished without trace as the Town's new approach style tore Watford apart.

NO SWEEPER

The Town dispensed with a sweeper, and if Raddy Antic was unhappy at being dropped to sub, there was plenty to smile about as Brian Horton, Ricky Hill and the recalled Lil Fuccillo kept the Town right on top.

Fuccillo was particularly impressive and after the initial breakthrough in the 37th minute, Watford were always second best.

Mr Taylor explained a defeat which must have sickened the Watford fans by admitting that perhaps he made a mistake in persevering with his youngsters on the wings.

It was wrong for the date at Kenilworth Road, but right for the long-term good of football as a game, he said. Maybe. But I'll bet that if he had any advance clue as to how good the Town would be, he would have opted for a more defensive policy. I suspect the youngsters were in because they had played in the team which had won at Wrexham despite being under heavy

pressure four days previously.

Watford were kept in the game for the first half-hour because Steve Sherwood made good saves from Hill, Fuccillo and Horton. His most effective match so far, and the use of three orthodox men in midfield gave the front men a much better quality of service.

Pat Rice tried to avoid being taken apart by Moss by standing well off, marking spaces instead of opponents, and the Town punished Watford for such foolishness.

TWO PENALTIES

Striker Gerry Armstrong went back to help defend his own goal-line, and brought down Moss to try to stop a by-line run. Moss scored from the penalty, and then repeated the trick four minutes later after Ian Bolton had bundled Brian Stein over.

Two minutes before half-time a lovely break by Hill opened up Watford down the middle, and from his pass Stein controlled the ball quickly to blast the third goal from the inside-right position.

ANTI-CLIMAX

The rest was anti-climax as the Town let Watford back into the game in terms of possession, particularly after Stein's second goal, in the 52nd minute. Fuccillo, always strong in the tackle, won the ball in defence, broke forward powerfully, and sent Moss away down the left-wing. Rice very kindly stood off again and, as the centre was delivered, Stein met it with a header to make it 4-0.

Watford had a couple of half-chances after that, and Fuccillo had to clear off the line from Steve Sims in a late flurry, but the only reward for a side that deserved little on the day was a 66th-minute goal for Ian Bolton, whose 20-yard free-kick took a deflection off Horton to beat Jake Findlay.



● **KILLER GOAL:** Brian Stein is airborne as he crashes in the Town's third to destroy Watford by half-time.

Match Details

LUTON TOWN 4, WATFORD 1

Half-time: 3—0 26 9 81

LUTON TOWN: Findlay; Stephens, Saxby, Donaghy, Aizlewood; Hill, Horton, Fuccillo; Stein, White, Moss.
Sub: Antic, not needed.

WATFORD: Sherwood; Rice, Sims, Bolton, Jackett; Taylor, Callaghan, Blissett, Barnes; Jenkins (Foskett, 45 minutes), Armstrong.

THE GOALS: David Moss two penalties, 33 and 37 minutes, after Gerry Armstrong fouled Moss and Ian Bolton fouled Brian Stein; Stein with two gems, shot from Ricky Hill's pass, 43 minutes, and header from Moss's centre, 52 minutes; Ian Bolton for Watford, 66 minutes, free-kick taking a deflection off Brian Horton.

OTHER GOAL ATTEMPTS: Town nine saved and six off target; Watford five saved and six wide. Corners: 9-6 to Watford, mostly in second half.

ATTENDANCE: 12,839, day's second biggest in the Second Division, but a thousand down on the last time Watford were here.

ENTERTAINMENT: Sheer joy for Town supporters, but even David Pleat says his team can still play better.

REFEREE: Brian Stevens, Gloucester: must be good, because neither side had the slightest complaints about him, although Geoff Hurst gave a TV opinion that neither penalty should have been given.

BOOKING: Luther Blissett for a foul on Moss.