

What the two managers said...

Graham Taylor:

SAID Graham Taylor: "One of us has got to lose and I would not even try to tell you who deserved to win tonight. But the disappointment is that we were two goals up with 14 minutes to go. You do not try to play offside in your own penalty area in that sort of situation."

"Young Lee Sinnott stepped up but he should not have risked making a mistake. You don't take unnecessary risks. We had lost our way a little in the second half but Luton were not getting behind us nor were they turning us. The only danger was one we presented to them."

"I happen to think Nwajobi was onside. We have got to learn from that situation. Let's face it, we were two goals up. Sherwood had not been extended and a lad who is still learning the game took a risk."

"So Luton are back in it and four minutes later they try a shot which takes one hell of a deflection. In extra time Sealey did well saving from Lohman and Callaghan."

"On Monday night Luton supporters were walking out of Kenilworth Road with heads down, feeling they were as good as out. Now it is our turn supposedly to feel that way having to go back to Luton for a second replay. But of course both teams are still very much in the tie."

"We had our moments of good fortune earlier on but we came back and had our moments, too. We are very closely matched and we have not been substantially worse than Luton so there is no reason to be pessimistic about going to Luton. Jan Lohman did very well. Three games in five days after being out for a year with three knee operations. He is the only player in my time here, who I would excuse having cramp in extra time. He did a great job."

David Pleat:

SAID Luton manager David Pleat: "When the tie was drawn I suggested jokingly that as the first game would be a draw, could we play it at Vicarage Road because we get more money from a bigger gate. It is a bigger pitch and a better playing surface. The playing surface at Vicarage Road is great, also you can see the game."

"We were criticised for playing a match which was too frenetic on Monday. I know all about that but Watford are great at fast play. They know what they are doing, know how to do it and have been coached superbly. It is very interesting what they do."

"It was also interesting seeing a lenient referee, a lot of fouls and no bookings. I don't think the players took too much advantage of the referee," he added with a smile.

"Our substitution was a success but you don't have to be clever to make a change. We had to do something at 2-0 down. Lohman and Taylor did ever so well for Watford and by tucking Stein in there we stretched them a little more when they were getting tired. It also gave McClelland something to think about."

"I thought the first goal might be offside. There was some hesitancy about it all but the lad took it calmly. There are a lot of cuts above the eyes. It was the same with the Watford lads on Monday."

"There is a lot of aerial ball and they seem to pick up cuts on both sides. Fitness will have a bearing on the replay. On the bench we were trying to see how many players looked tired."

"I just hope that these replays do not jeopardise either of our chances of a fixture pile up at the end of the season when we are at the wrong end of the First Division."

Jackett fit — Sterling doubt

JOHN BARNES will not be fit in time for tomorrow's second replay at Kenilworth Road. He is still recovering from a hamstring injury sustained at Newcastle on Saturday.

Kenny Jackett is fit and available for selection as was the case on Wednesday. Jackett has steadily recovered from a thigh injury sustained in training last Thursday but although he passed a fitness test on Wednesday he was not selected.

Watford's major doubt is over the fitness of Worrell Sterling. He suffered from a stiffening-up of the groin towards the end of the first 90 minutes on Wednesday night and was substituted.

"The biggest problem is that although it will ease off over the next 48 hours," said Taylor yesterday, "one does not know whether he will have totally recovered in time for the game at Luton."

Les Taylor (knock in the thigh) and John McClelland (blow in the calf) received treatment yesterday but both are expected to be fit for tomorrow's tie.

The biggest disappointment is the injury to Barnes. He recovered from the ankle knock he received in the England game last Wednesday and was never a doubtful starter for Saturday's game at Newcastle.

But again he succumbed to a hamstring injury. "In the past he has torn the fibres in the sheath which encases the hamstring but this time he has actually pulled the hamstring slightly right in the buttock region."

"It is a soft muscle injury and should not take too long to recover from," said the Watford boss.

"Kenny Jackett pulled his hamstring and was out for six weeks last season but we do not expect it to be anywhere near as long for John because it is not as bad an injury."

Fixture alternatives

WATFORD travel to Luton on Saturday for the Fifth Round second replay, kick-off 3 pm. The match is NOT all-ticket but Luton have reserved terrace bays K2 and K3 for Watford fans as on Monday.

If another replay is needed, it will take place at Vicarage Road on Monday night (7.45 pm) and this too will not be all-ticket. The police and both clubs feel there is insufficient time in which to arrange ticket sales. If the teams are still level on Monday night, the clubs then toss for the next replay venue.

If Watford lose on Saturday, they travel to Sunderland for a First Division fixture (7.30 pm) at Roker Park on Tuesday and Watford host the FA Youth Cup quarter-final with Mansfield (7.30 pm) that night.

If Watford win on Saturday, then tickets for the all-ticket FA Cup quarter-final with Millwall go on sale at Vicarage Road on Sunday morning (10 am until 12 noon). The date of the Millwall match is still being debated. Watford want to play on Wednesday, allowing extra respite from the exacting fifth round (and so too do Luton if they win), but Millwall want to play on Tuesday because they want respite before next Saturday's promotion game. This problem has not been resolved at the time of going to Press. In the event of Watford winning at Luton, the Youth Cup tie would be postponed.

Next Saturday's game with Chelsea is all-ticket and tickets are available at Watford on presentation of the usual proof of Watford support. The kick-off for that game is 11.30 am on March 16.

Watford's match with Aston Villa, switched to March 21 is now pencilled in for April 24 at Villa Park. The March date is now crowded by international fixtures and Watford will lose three or four players as Graham Taylor does not believe in withdrawing players from international duty.

Still to be arranged are games with Manchester United and Ipswich at Vicarage Road.

The Press are often criticised for creating or publicising atmospheres of violence. But I am absolutely amazed at Luton and Watford's decisions not to make their games all-ticket affairs first on Saturday at Kenilworth Road and then if necessary, Vicarage Road on Monday night. I hope their decision proves to be a harmless one.

There was trouble at the Luton end on Wednesday night. "Rumours flooded round the ground that they were Chelsea or West Ham fans," said Eddie Plumley. "But there were no infiltrators. The police moved in after sharpened coins had been hurled and a load of spitting had occurred. All were Luton fans."

Nine are understood to have been arrested and 12 ejected.

Watford lost the toss of a coin for venues — directors of both clubs being involved in the after-match spin, witnessed by both managers on Wednesday night.

Watford definitely play at Luton on Saturday (3 pm), the Juniors definitely entertain Chelsea at Woodside (11 am) and the Reserves definitely travel to Swansea on Saturday (3 pm).

Offside debate as Watford toss it away



Les Taylor, partially hidden by Worrell Sterling, fires Watford ahead just before half-time.

WO Photo B1229

WATFORD, with precious little help from the referee and linesman, tossed away the chance of FA Cup progress to the Quarter Finals and even to the last four, when they conceded two goals in the last 14 minutes of Wednesday's FA Cup Fifth Round replay at Vicarage Road.

Luton, bidding to extend manager David Pleat's FA Cup progress to record levels, came back from the dead, aided by a goal that was so blatantly offside, that everyone seemed to treat a Watford free kick as a formality.

Emeka Nwajobi's 76th minute goal was allowed to stand and Luton's cup luck was further boosted four minutes later by a Ricky Hill shot which took a double deflection, leaving Steve Sherwood flat-footed and off balance as he bobbed into the net beyond his reach.

It was an incredible turnaround in a tie where fortunes fluctuated first one way and then another. Watford had the cup luck when a shocked Stein failed to open the account within the first 30 seconds. With the goal at his mercy, he allowed the ball to bounce between his feet and the chance was lost.

And, after Jimmy Gilligan had failed to convert a chance with only the goal-keeper to beat, Watford's cup luck held when Harford rifled a half-volley against the bar.

Yet, after the first half hour of Watford territorial domination, the game seemed to be ebbing Luton's way when Les Taylor struck as half time approached.

Watford 2.....Luton 2

(aet) Taylor 45 Nwajobi 76
Terry 62 Hill 80

WATFORD: Sherwood; Sinnott, Terry, McClelland, Roston, Taylor, Lohman, Callaghan, Blissett, Gilligan, Sterling. Substitutes: Bardley for Sterling after 80 minutes.
LUTON: Sealey; Breacker, Thomas, Turner, Foster, Donaghy, Hill, Stein, Harford, Nwajobi, Daniel. Substitute: Parker for Daniel after 60 minutes.

Attendance: 19,867. Referee: Brian Hill (Kettering).
Share of play: Watford 50 per cent.
Free kicks: Watford 36, Luton 50 (including 10 for offside).
Corners: Watford 10, Luton 1.
Goal attempts on target (off target): Watford 10 (8), Luton 3 (15).

Watford goal attempts by: Blissett 5, Lohman 3, Terry 3, Callaghan 3, Gilligan 1, McClelland 1, Taylor 1, Sterling 1.
Bookings: None.

And when Steve Terry brilliantly rounded off Wilf Roston's magnificent run to put the Hornets 2-0 ahead, the whole vista of last year's sunshine exodus to Villa Park and that magical day at Wembley, came into focus.

But the pipedreams were smashed and there is no doubt in my mind that Nwajobi was some four yards offside when he received Gary Parker's through ball. Graham Taylor, perhaps seeking to diffuse the disappointment, blamed Lee Sinnott for trying to play offside in the first place. The manager may have a point, but to me the young defender was so successful in playing the Luton striker offside, the resultant theorising was academic. Unfortunately the linesman was unimpressed and unimpressive.

Then, to complete the revival, Luton had a large slice of fortune with a double deflection for the equaliser. So we prepared for a repeat of last season's extra-time thriller, but it was not to be. Les Sealey made two fine saves and Luton live to hope for better things on Saturday.

As a game, it was far from a classic. Perhaps it is the urgency of the Cup, but both teams looked pallid shadows of former sides who have battled out this derby saga in recent years. Watford have always had commitment and ability to pressurise opponents but they have had artistry as well. On Wednesday night, Roston's run stood out as a piece of stunning individualism. In the main Watford relied on big hearts and high energy — their potential limited by some sterling Luton defensive work in the air and their own limitations in that area. Significantly Watford opened the scoring after winning their first ball in the air in the Luton area.

Luton had moments of control when they finally put their passes together but they lacked the invention that used to mesmerise the Hornets in patches during previous meetings between the two sides.

Referee Bill received praise from both managers for his understanding and handling of Monday's tie.

On Wednesday he took leniency too far. Despite all the praise allotted to the referee on Monday, I thought he should have booked Terry, Harford and Foster. On Wednesday Terry was extremely fortunate not to be booked for two cynical tackles and Foster stretched the referee's patience beyond normal bounds.

Would the game have flowed more and been less disjointed had the referee reached for his book? There were a staggering number of free kicks — 86 in total — and that left little time for flowing movements.

Perhaps a 3-2 Watford victory would have been a fairer reflection of the chances, but the linesman's yellow flag stayed down, despite the incredulous stare of a referee seeking confirmation of what seemed the

most blatant of offside goals, and so the teams stayed even to fight another day.

McClelland, Terry, Roston, Lohman and Taylor won their battles and gave outstanding displays but when it came to creativity, no-one seemed to build on the platform that quintet provided.

A group of Norwegian fans, who came over earlier in the year only to be frustrated by snow, returned this week. They paid £360 to make the trip to England on Saturday and explained: "We felt there were good prospects of seeing three cup ties in one week."

Their crystal ball has proved quite remarkable.

Home-town bias is an accepted part of football but I was brought up in the belief that certain supporters were renowned for their appreciation of the other team as well as being biased towards their own heroes.

The fans at Newcastle were one such group but

Saturday's crowd reaction at St James's Park, buried the Goedicke reputation for fairness. They booed Nigel Callaghan for falling to the ground after coming within an ace of a broken leg and later cheered when John Barnes pulled a hamstring and summoned the trainers.

"Times have changed," said the watching Jackie Milburn. "You'd think they would want to see the finest talent on the field, not cheer when he has to go off."

There are always groups of fans so partisan one cannot even begin to discuss alternative viewpoints — but seldom have I heard a whole stadium of supporters baying their displeasure at the referee during a blow up against one of their players for a two-footed, knee-high tackle. It happened repeatedly as Goedicke broke all bounds on Saturday.

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Cup-tie blow by blow

LUTON almost took the lead after 20 seconds in an unbelievable situation. A forward pass by Breacker was challenged for by Nwajobi and as McClelland came in, the defender scooped the ball back towards goal. Sherwood backpedalled but as the ball dropped he punched it on to the underside of his bar, where it bounced down at the feet of the disbelieving Stein, who failed to make a connection.

Terry produced the first Watford shot when he sent an angled drive over the bar from a half-clearance following a corner but, at the other end, hesitation on the part of Watford let in Harford, who drove Daniel's cross over the bar with a first-time drive.

A slick pass from Callaghan sent Gilligan clear of the offside trap but Sealey spread himself well and parried the shot for a corner.

Turner fired in a speculative shot which Sherwood watched a trifle casually as it went only just wide and Sealey in the Luton goal was awake to Lohman's overhead kick, which he caught under the bar.

Watford were well on top territorially at this stage but Foster reigned supreme at the centre of Luton's defence. Sinnott almost found a way through with a 25-yard free-kick which Sealey saw late and dived to smother.

Luton gradually found their way back into the game and from Hill's cross Harford thundered the ball against the bar and then a few minutes later Breacker drove wide of the target with considerable power.

Sealey, who had almost gifted Watford a goal on Monday with a clearance from outside his area, again nearly rued his forward

foray. He hacked a Callaghan through ball out of the path of Gilligan and it finally found its way to Sterling, who gathered, cut in and sent a dipping 38th-minute shot just over the bar.

Even so, Luton were looking the better side at this stage but with the interval rapidly approaching, Foster fouled Gilligan somewhat unnecessarily on the touchline and Callaghan lofted the resultant free-kick towards the far post. There Terry battled and nodded back towards the penalty spot, where it rolled slowly while agonised Watford fans watched as Les Taylor came

penalty area without anyone touching him and protested long and loud to the referee — the unacceptable face of football gamesmanship. Harford headed wide from a fair position following a corner as Luton continued to press forward. Luton brought on substitute Gary Parker for Ray Daniel and went close when Nwajobi put in a good run but the ball went wide.

Callaghan intercepted a crossfield pass by Luton and pushed the ball out to Blissett, who drove wide on the run. In the 76th minute Luton reduced the arrears with a goal which looked so blatantly offside that even Luton fans delayed their celebration for a few seconds before acclaiming it. Parker sent a long diagonal cross into the box, where Nwajobi met it four yards clear of the defence and went through what seemed no more than a symbolic act of clipping the ball over Sherwood.

Incredibly the linesman's flag remained down and the goal was given. More bad luck followed four minutes later when Hill sent a hopeful shot goalwards and the ball took a double deflection, leaving Sherwood off balance and wrongfooted before it bobbed past his outstretched arm.

Watford had the best opportunities in the first half of extra time when substitute David Bardley crossed for Blissett to put in a fair header which Sealey covered well.

The best chance came when Blissett juggled a dropping ball in the box and Lohman took it off him, cut past a defender and fired goalwards. Sealey stuck out a foot to deflect the ball on to the woodwork and away for a fine save.

As the extra-time interval approached, Harford collected a deflected pass from Hill but drove behind the

goal. The striker looks the part but his finishing, with one exception, was abysmal. He was again awry when he shot over the target from a fair position after breaking through the middle and later put a shot behind on the turn but under pressure.

Callaghan created a chance to hit the headlines when in the dying minutes he cut inside and sent a shot firmly on target but Sealey had read the situation well.

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Williams boost — Jobson shock

WATFORD were both shocked and pleased with news of their former players. Youngster Neil Williams, who joined Hull after leaving the Hornets last summer, is in the City team, scoring in midweek and impressing manager Brian Horton.

"That is very pleasing. Neil was coming on well until his multiple fracture," said Taylor. "It is always good to see a former apprentice going on to do well."

But the Watford boss was shocked this week to hear news of Richard Jobson's pre-match disappearance at Hull.

"When I read about it, I thought he must have been kidnapped," said Taylor.

Hull sources reveal that Jobson followed a teammate by car to Boothferry Park on Saturday, as the players prepared to report for the match. The colleague turned into the ground but Jobson drove straight on and returned to Hemel Hempstead where he has a house for sale.

On Monday an apologetic Jobson returned to Hull and was fined a week's wages.

"It was up to Hull to make their decision on his playing ability," said Taylor. "But obviously managers inquire as to their off-field personality. I gave Richard the highest recommendation. He had never been a problem here. We are all very surprised and embarrassed by it. There is no way we would try and slide someone off to another club. The whole incident is totally out of character."

Jobson now finds himself relegated to the Reserves at Hull, with Dennis Booth in charge, but I am informed that the player's impulsive trip was spurred by intense homesickness for Watford, the club, locality and former team-mates.

Former Hornets defender Jobson is on the transfer list at Peterborough at his own request.

It is a good deal and what is not," said Taylor. But while newspapers have given increasing space of late to clubs' complaints about agents — from AC Milan to Highbury — it is part of the First Division scene.

Watford are unable to compete with the wage structure of such as Manchester United, Liverpool and other big city clubs. Promising players, such as Barnes have a right to expect an opportunity to bring their wages up by additional marketing.

But when Watford move into the transfer market, these are some of the problems involved after first assessing if the player will fit into the Watford style and approach to the game both on and off the field. A player who recently asked LBC £4,000 for a five-minute radio interview, is not likely to take kindly to devoting a couple of hours free of charge to turning over a pile of pennies at The Cat and Goblin in Abbots Langley.

And there is another side to it, even after the transfer is finalised. The incoming player may well have signed an exclusive contract with Hunk Sportswear and Leisure. Watford having signed an exclusive contract with a rival firm, find they have to keep an eye out for the kit permutations.

During the run up to the Cup Final, once, when being interviewed for a minute on television at the club's training ground Graham Taylor had to make sure that anyone filmed in the background working out in training, was wearing the appropriately sponsored apparel.

Perhaps, who knows, the day may come when a player asks for a transfer because he doesn't like the brand of the club's kit and leisure wear.

Or again, more probably, a transfer deals breaks down after the clubs and player have agreed on all matters but the manager has been unable to reach agreement on the agent's personal terms.

No longer Mr Ten Per Cent

FIVE months ago following the dramatic departure of Mo Johnston to Celtic, I wrote at length about the facts behind the whole Johnston saga and the activities of "the man in a fur coat."

Over the past two weeks, "the man in the fur coat" has come under increasing fire in national newspaper revelations. The man, agent Frank Boyd, has, it is reported, been banned from Highbury and the training ground. He was also involved in the Charlie Nicholas-Punk Heiress Affair which hit the headlines two weeks ago.

Graham Taylor's experiences, which appeared in these columns at the time of Johnston's transfer, were featured in one national newspaper article over the weekend.

"I said I was prepared to give the facts to the League or FA if they were interested. I'm not talking about anything illegal but it is a relatively new development in football," said Graham Taylor this week.

Taylor's frustration with Johnston's off-field inconsistencies and his dwindling on-field enthusiasm at the beginning of this current campaign, eventually provoked him to cut the losses and sell Johnston to Celtic.

Agent Boyd, Taylor contends, was anxious that Johnston should go to one of the London clubs, and being based himself in London, was not keen for the striker to return to Scotland where the potential for player marketing is smaller.

Taylor attempted to call Johnston's bluff and offer him the chance of joining Celtic — the club he professed to love. Johnston, after a little hesitation at the last minute, went back to Scotland.

Even on the day of final talks between Celtic, Johnston and myself, I arrived at my own club to find that the agent problems," said Taylor.

It gets to the point where you wonder who manages whom. Obviously players want to make the most of their

individual careers but a manager ends up being more and more involved with issues other than training and playing matches."

John Barnes is obviously a marketable commodity and he has a one-year, unsigned agreement with an agent.

"We all keep in touch. We decided to see how it goes for a year and John works exclusively for them. A contract would

then be drawn up based on the experiences of the first year," said the Watford boss.

Not so long ago a draft agreement was sent by another agent who wanted to look after Barnes' interests.

The agent was going to take 40 per cent of everything John earned — wages included. It also stipulated that he could not be sold to another club without the agent's permission. Naturally it ended up in the waste-paper basket," Taylor revealed.

Players are constantly being bombarded with pension and insurance schemes. "I can understand that in all businesses, it is the employees on one side and the employers on the other. There is a feeling of us against them. But we have agreed at this club, and players would be better advised to come to us before making some of these agreements. It is very difficult for young boys to know what



it's just a thought

Oliver Phillips