

Points given away

LUTON TOWN 0 WATFORD 2

CHRISTMAS GENEROSITY was unbounded as Luton Town made a present of their unbeaten home record to Watford on Boxing Day.

They gave away two early goals, missed a penalty, and were so lethargic that long before the end fans were streaming way, after sporadic outbursts of slow hand-clapping.

It was one of those days when nothing the Town tried came off. The passing almost always missed its intended targets and gave Watford the advantage.

And it was such an easy derby day romp for the visitors that they were able to coast through the final 70 minutes, saving themselves for better things.

Manager Graham Taylor's only complaint was that the football authorities should have taken the fixture away from Boxing Day.

PLEASURE DENIED

There were 5,000 people 15 miles away who were denied part of their Christmas pleasure, he said. He did not dispute the Town's right to ban away fans, but felt that on Boxing Day a team from 200 or 300 miles away should have been sent to Luton, with Watford playing elsewhere and able to give their supporters holiday entertainment.

Town fans might have wished for something similar — perhaps Newcastle v Luton. Most of 11,000 fans would then have been spared the worst home showing so far.

Manager John Moore blamed senior players for the match-killing problems. Mal Donaghy tried to dribble a ball out of defence to give Kevin Richardson a gift second goal, with the game only 17 minutes old, and in the 58th minute Peter Nicholas became the third Town player this season to miss a penalty.

KEEPER UNTROUBLED

Watford goalkeeper Tony Coton had an almost untroubled match, and the entertainment vanished after the goals. "It became a non-event," admitted Mr Taylor.

Most of the match was nondescript, and the absence of visiting fans was felt more than usual, with the play doing little to generate anything like the normal derby day atmosphere.

The Town's defence was about as mobile as candles on a tree when Gary Porter nipped in to score in the sixth minute after Richardson had hammered in a free kick to the near post.

Eleven minutes later Worrell Sterling attacked down the Town's right, and although Stacey North and Les Sealey scrambled to complete half a clearance Donaghy tried to dribble clear. Richardson punished such audacity by taking the ball off the defender and smacking it into the net.

DIVING CATCH

Coton had used his feet to save from Mark Stein, after a thrilling solo run, and made a diving catch from Donaghy's header as the Town threatened to get back into it.

Brian Stein flashed a hard cross in from the left, but Mike Newell failed to get the decisive contact.

Darron McDonough was stretchered off early in the second half after a clash with Kenny Jackett, and was taken to hospital with a broken nose.

The goal the Town needed should have been scored when Ashley Grimes, desperately trying to support a misfiring attack, was bundled down by David Bardsley.

Newell and Brian Stein had missed the two previous penalties awarded to the Town this season. Nicholas made it third time unlucky by shooting into the terrace from the spot.

"An international defender tried to dribble the ball out of his area instead of kicking it out," complained the Town manager. "Then another international missed a penalty . . . If one had cleared and the other had scored it would have been 1-1, although I am not saying that we deserved to win."