

HARFORD PICKS THE RIGHT AWAY DAY!

87/88

Ray misses out on scrappy clash



● MY BALL . . . Ian Allinson and Watford's John McClelland tussle for possession.

BOSS Ray Harford picked the right day to go on a scouting mission for the Hatters.

He was fortunate enough to miss a game between two sides whose seasons are effectively over, and who played like it.

The match had no passion or commitment and even a harsh looking penalty decision passed without any real controversy.

There was enough incident in the first 45 minutes to keep the paying spectator happy but the second-half was not only drab, but dreadfully scrappy with neither side taking the initiative.

And stand-in manager Jimmy Ryan was first to admit it. He said: "There was a lack of passion but it was strange circumstances for a local derby.

"They are already relegated and we are just coming out of the cup final events."

He put the poor performance from Hatters down to lack of motivation after the dramas of the Littlewoods Cup victory over Arsenal.

And he said many players are tired due to the amount of football

being played with several key players out of action through injury as well.

Ironically, though, the fans must have thought they were in for a bank holiday treat when Luton twice went close within the first few minutes.

Only three minutes into the game Danny Wilson intercepted a Gary Porter pass on the halfway line and put Ian Allinson away on the right.

Wilson was then on hand to receive Allinson's pass into the box but the little midfielder took too long over his shot and eventually hit it straight to Watford 'keeper Tony Coton.

Then two minutes later Kingsley Black worked a neat move with Allinson on the left and was able to put over a perfect cross to the unmarked Rob Johnson

LUTON 2 WATFORD 1 By MARK McKENNA

who could only side foot it to the grateful Coton.

Luton should have been two goals up but Watford were able to compose themselves and get into the game which settled down.

On the half-hour Luton were awarded a corner and from it a long punt upfield put Watford's Stuart Rimmer into a one-on-one situation with Tim Breacker.

He turned his man and struck a lovely shot that hit the crossbar. Young Rod Thomas collected the rebound and hit a shot which Andy Dibble was only able to fling his body in the way off.

The ball was in the air and Marvin Johnson trying to head it over the bar inadvertently scored an own goal.

The Watford team's joy was shortlived though when only four



● IN FULL FLIGHT . . . wing wonder Kingsley Black skips past the challenge of Kenny Jackett.

minutes later Black headed the ball down to David Oldfield in the visitors' penalty area.

The striker, making his first full appearance in the league, rounded two Watford defenders and cracked a fierce left-foot drive past Coton to level the scores.

Then a minute before half-time Hatters were awarded a free kick after Mike Morris pushed Oldfield in the back.

Wilson aimed for Steve Foster who rose with Iwan Roberts but

the ball went straight over them.

Referee Kevin Breen, standing only yards away, said Foster was pushed and gave a penalty which Wilson comfortably put home.

The second period died a slow and painful death with only 25-yard plus efforts from Rob Johnson then Watford's Porter to give the crowd anything to cheer about.

Luton seemed content to keep the scoreline the same while Watford did not seem willing to even

salvage some local derby pride.

LUTON: Dibble, Breacker, Grimes, R. Johnson, Foster, M. Johnson, Wilson, Allinson, Oldfield, Hill, Black. Subs not used: Nwajiobi, Cobb.

WATFORD: Coton, Gibbs, Rostron (Sherwood, 73 minutes), Jackett, Morris, McClelland, Thomas (Hodges, 73 minutes), Rimmer, Roberts, Porter, Holden.