

PASSING SHOT PAYNE ENSURES PLACE IN HISTORY WITH PERFECT TEN

LUTON NEWS



By Bill Edgar

ON EASTER Monday of 1936, Joe Payne took the field with his career dying and left it with his name immortalised. Deemed a failure after nearly two years at Luton Town, his first league club, where he was a defender for the reserves, his surprise selection as a centre forward against Bristol Rovers only resulted from the unavailability of other players. Yet somehow he scored ten goals in a 12-0 victory, the only time a player has reached double figures in an English league game.

In this picture, Payne (left) converts one of several goals created by George Stephenson (right), the left winger, and Payne was keen for his teammate to share the plaudits. "I do believe I played well. I am a very happy fellow, but please

give praise to Stephenson, who made nearly all our goals," he said.

Born in Bolsover, Payne had impressed sufficiently as a centre forward for his local colliery team to be signed by Luton in 1934, but, unable to make his mark up front for the reserves, had been converted into a defender. He settled into his new position but had made only three appearances for the first team when, aged 22, he turned up at Kenilworth Road expecting to watch his club-mates take on Rovers, against whom they had drawn 2-2 away three days earlier.

Injuries to the club's three recognised centre forwards, though, persuaded Luton to give the young Payne a try as they desperately sought a solution to the goalscoring problems that were hampering their push for promotion from

THE DATE: April 13, 1936

THE PLACE: Kenilworth Road, Luton

THE EVENT: Joe Payne scores ten goals for Luton Town

the third division (south). On Easter Saturday, the Kenilworth Road crowd had watched a 0-0 draw against Millwall and the first quarter of the match against Rovers was unpromising for the new forward, who was tackled regularly as the rain and sleet fell.

Then, after 24 minutes, Payne collected a long clearance from his goalkeeper, Bill Dolman, broke the deadlock — and the fun started. By half-time Luton were 4-0 up and he had completed his hat-trick with a goal from a rebound

and another after a left-wing cross. In the dressing-room his team-mates jokingly said he was on course to break the league record of nine goals, set four months before by Bunny Bell, of Tranmere Rovers, in a 13-4 win over Oldham Athletic. Many said that Bell's landmark would never be beaten.

Payne doubled his tally within 12 minutes of the interval and his next three were all set up by Stephenson, the record-equalling ninth coming with a header from a corner. Then, with four minutes left and Payne lying in the muddy goalmouth, he swung his boot at the ball to complete his perfect ten, none of which came from the penalty spot. Fred Roberts, with the second goal, and George Martin, with the twelfth, were Luton's other scorers. Payne only learnt that he had scored ten rather than

nine when he was told by the referee as he left the pitch that he had scored the seventh rather than Martin, who had followed up his header.

Despite his efforts, Luton finished only second in the table that season, behind Coventry City, and thus did not go up, but they were promoted as champions a year later, when Payne scored 55 league goals, still a club record. During that campaign he scored twice in his only England appearance, an 8-0 win over Finland. He later joined Chelsea, but injury curtailed his career.

Thereafter Payne, who died in 1975 aged 61, concentrated on cricket, turning out for Luton and Bedfordshire. However, as long as there are football record books, he will be remembered as the Derbyshire miner who struck gold on that freezing day in 1936.