

# They took this

SOUTHPORT 0, LUTON TOWN 3

SHOWING the cool efficiency and class that has marked all their away matches this season, the Town, on Tuesday, shattered Southport's unbeaten home record spanning 25 matches.

In the end they virtually won easing up, with Southport rocked by three second-half goals.

Sparking off the Town's success was a great effort by Malcolm MacDONALD in the 57th minute which was really the product of near-desperation by Mike Keen.

# with easy stride

69/70

## Report by ERIC PUGH

Just a minute before, Keen had missed the chance of the night, when, from no more than six yards, he shot high over after MacDonald had nodded on a centre by French.

One could almost sense Keen gritting his teeth after that, because he came through with tremendous determination to push the ball to MacDonald.

## Wham!

Three opponents were between the inside-right and the goal, but he did not hesitate or worry about finesse.

Instead, he hit the ball first time, and it hurtled into the roof of the net past the startled Wraith.

Southport had had their chances, notably just before half-time, during a period when the Town after having gone along easily, and without danger, for the best part of half an hour, lost their grip temporarily.

However the defence held firm, with Davie making fine saves from Russell and Peat, and Slough twice stepping in to cover when danger threatened.

Again, immediately after the interval, Southport had the opportunity to go ahead, Andrews missing a hard low cross from McCarthy.

On the wet, slippery surface, accuracy was a matter of some difficulty, but the Town were always the better balanced, with a decided grip in midfield.

## Danger hint

After MacDonald's goal, there was just one hint of danger, when Russell produced a rising drive that Davie pushed over the bar.

Almost immediately after this, in the 71st minute, came the second goal. This time it was FRENCH, hitting his best form, who did the trick.

He picked up a pass from MacDonald, closed in, and somehow squeezed the ball

between Wraith and the near post. Bad goalkeeping maybe, but good opportunism all the same.

Southport's hopes had died long since, but they did manage a final fling, during which Alty stormed through, and his shot was stopped on the line by the ever dependable Bannister.

That produced an immediate reaction from the Town, and Tees was unlucky when he threw himself full-length to head a cross by French inches wide.

He was hurt in the process, not for the first time, because he had a bruising battle with Harrison.

With four minutes left, the Town's victory became complete when NICHOLL, who had been a solid bastion of the defence, suddenly appeared up front.

There he was very much on the spot to head in a centre from Keen, with Wraith rooted to his line. This was an unexpected bonus for Nicholl, who with each match, looks more dominating and more com-

pletely in command of the situation, particularly in the air.

He has struck up a happy understanding with the close-covering Slough, and Dougan and Bannister completed a thoroughly sound back four.

In midfield, Keen and Allen were much in command, and Collins in the intermediate sort of position he adopts away from home, did his share of the donkey work.

## Their job

From the pattern of things in away matches, a heavy responsibility devolves on MacDonald and Tees, as the strikers. Inevitably, they are subjected to much heavy tackling. Tees bore the brunt on this occasion, and had the bruises to prove it.

However, he kept going willingly, and the way in which MacDonald took his goal, plus his relentless probing, underlines that in signing him manager Alec

Stock made the capture of the summer.

If anyone needs proof it is provided by his eight goals in 12 matches.

French had a good second half, and is much more dangerous now that he is making his centres earlier, instead of making for the deadline.

So, the Town maintain not only their unbeaten record but their leadership, and by the way they are taking difficult away assignments in their stride they are going to take some shifting off their pinnacle.

**SOUTHPORT:** Wraith; Pearson, Alty; Peat, Harrison, Clarke; McCarthy, Field, Andrews, Russell, Pring. Substitute: Groves.

**LUTON TOWN:** Davie; Dougan, Bannister; Keen, Nicholl, Slough; Collins, MacDonald, Tees, Allen, French. Substitute: Sheffield.

**Attendance:** 4,003. Receipts £850.

**Referee:** A. A. Green of Sheffield.