

SEASON DIES — AND SO DO TOWN

3093 28/4/73

THE LUTON TOWN league soccer season, which looked such a healthy prospect only a few months ago, died quietly on Saturday, killed off by the third consecutive defeat.

Without unduly straining themselves, Oxford United completed the double over the Town. But at least Luton scored a goal, even if it didn't come from a forward.

Which means—wait for it—that the Town have now scored all of two goals in their last eight matches of the league season.

The figures speak for themselves, and once again at Oxford the Town had nothing up front beyond a certain amount of willingness and occasional honest endeavour.

There was not much skill, and the only bright spot in the forward line was the energy and enthusiasm of teenager Phil O'Connor, who was making his debut.

He had a better game than many of the more experienced men around him, running hard and directly, and laying off the ball well.

With defender Paul Price also getting a run-out as sub for the last 12 minutes of the game, the writing must surely now be on the wall for some of the older players on the Town's books.



● Graham Horn—kept the score down.

It might be sad, but the established "stars" are not capable of turning the Town into a team good enough for promotion, and if things are to be better next season, new faces must be brought in.

It's a cruel world in football. The Town's players have given us a lot of pleasure, and in all fairness, a middling position in Division II is something that a lot of other clubs in this country would envy.

But on Saturday, I felt that the Town looked more like relegation candidates than promotion possibilities. It was a scrappy game,



MATCH DETAILS

OXFORD UTD 2, LUTON TOWN 1

Half-time: 1-1

TOWN: Horn, Shanks, Thomson, Slough, Faulkner, Goodeve, Anderson, John Ryan, Busby, Hindson (Price, 78 minutes), O'Connor.

OXFORD: Burton, Light, Shaker, Roberts, Colin Clarke, Atkinson, Gough (Skeen, 78 minutes), Derek Clarke, Cassidy, Curran, Aylott.

THE GOALS: Slough for Luton, 30 mins; Cassidy for Oxford, 32 mins; Roberts for Oxford, 74 mins.

REFEREE: Derek Nippard, Bournemouth; not one of his best days.

ATTENDANCE: 6,318.

ENTERTAINMENT: Not much from the Town.

with the Town team disrupted by injuries. Peter Anderson fluffed an early chance laid on for him by an electrifying run by Gordon Hindson, and Graham Horn made two good saves before the Town went ahead.

O'Connor laid the ball off to Alan Slough near the half-way line. The Oxford defence funnelled back as Slough advanced, and then stood in disbelief as Slough hit a superb shot from nearly 30 yards into the net.

It was a great goal, but within two minutes Oxford were level. John Faulkner headed out a cross from Oxford's right, but Atkinson headed the ball straight back into the penalty area, and with Faulkner still on the ground from the clearance, Cassidy scored from about 10 yards.

Faulkner was booked for

arguing with the referee about the goal, but there could be no argument about Oxford's winner.

Faulkner was penalised for obstruction in the box. Most people on the ground thought it should have been a penalty, but Curran's neat chip was headed into goal by Roberts.

Oxford were much too good for the Town, and Horn made two brilliant saves to keep the score-line respectable.

Faulkner had a hard time of it, and his booking looked ridiculous later in the game when Oxford striker Cassidy felled him with a tackle over the top, and escaped scot free.

There's something wrong when a man can go unpenalised for that, and yet be in trouble for nothing more violent than a rude word or two.

into the net.

Promotion hopes: 'WE'RE IN WITH A CHANCE'

PROMOTION to the First Division is not just a pipe dream for Luton Town. It is to be done.

That was the firm conviction of manager Harry Wilson when he talked about Saturday's triumph over Rotherham, and he dis-

The climax of the Town's first push for promotion, but the manager

only saw in the second. Rotherham never was capable of upsetting odds, and the manager

Last goal of the season in the wrong net

THE LAST goal of the season—and it's going into the wrong net. Oxford's Dave Roberts

heads the winner with Town captain Bobby Thomson and goalkeeper Graham Horn both unable to stop the ball.

Roberts took the chance perfectly, running in to meet Hugh Curran's short cross from an indirect free kick in the penalty area. He found himself a yard of space to spare, despite

the attentions of the Town defenders.

The Town's best chances at the other end were made for each other by Gordon Hindson and Peter Anderson. But they both boomed.

Anderson failed to control the ball when he was left with only the goalkeeper in front of him, and later in the game Hindson swung wildly and completely missed the ball when Anderson crossed to him near the edge of the penalty area.

Alan Slough, pictured

in action below, ended his frustrating season with a superb goal. He has been slightly less than deliriously happy in recent weeks because he was not able to command a regular place in the team.

He was not picked for any of the Easter games, but injuries to other players let him in for Saturday's match and he celebrated from 30 yards.

At last it gave us something to remember from a disappointing end to the season.



THE LOST CHANCE

ONLY THREE months ago, as this headline from late January shows, the Town were able to think seriously about winning promotion. They were equal fourth in the league, five points behind leaders Burnley, and well in contention.

But they finished up 12th, 21 points below Burnley. In the 15 league matches since they beat Nottingham Forest at home on January 27, the Town won only three. They scored nine goals and conceded 24.