

REMEMBER WHEN...?

Mel Henderson looks through the archives at a previous encounter between tomorrow's opponents

Win made it six out of seven for Town



SMART MOVE: Former Blues striker David Johnson (with moustache) opening his boutique in Ipswich in the 1970s

Photograph: EADT

IPSWICH celebrated their first-ever win at Kenilworth Road by staying on top of the First Division. The table made very pleasant reading for Town fans as it showed their favourites out in front, a point ahead of Liverpool and Manchester City, after they had won six of their opening seven games of the season. Tottenham, Arsenal twice,

Luton 1 Ipswich 4

Football League, First Division
September 14, 1974

Luton: Barber, Shanks, Thomson, Anderson, Faulkner, John Ryan, Hindson, Husband, Butlin, West and Alston. Sub not used: Jim Ryan. Scorer: Alston 67.

Ipswich: Sivell, Burley, Mills, Talbot, Hunter, Beattie, Hamilton, Viljoen, Woods, Whymark and Lambert (Gates 54). Scorers: Talbot 9, 60 pen, Hamilton 29, Whymark 80.

Referee: T Reynolds (Swansea).

Attendance: 17,577.

Burnley and Everton had all been beaten by the time Bobby Robson and his players boarded their new £30,000 Mercedes team coach for the trip to Bedfordshire, with a defeat at Sheffield United their only setback.

Despite the absence of striker David Johnson, who failed a late fitness test on his injured ankle, Ipswich moved into top gear

straight away and cruised to a victory every bit as comfortable as the scoreline suggested.

Clive Woods switched into the middle, with Mick Lambert on the left wing, and Town were in celebratory mood even before the kick-off with defender Allan Hunter restored to the side after it seemed he was on his way from Portman Road.

Hunter had missed the previous game, a League Cup win at Coventry, because he was discussing a £200,000 transfer to Leicester, and it was widely expected that he would sign for the Foxes.

But right at the last minute, with pen in hand and apparently poised to add his signature to a contract, he had a dramatic change of heart, deciding instead to stay put.

Explaining the amazing about-turn, Hunter said: "When it came to the crunch I just couldn't force myself to leave Ipswich."

It took Hunter & Co just nine minutes to take the lead. Lambert's corner found Bryan Hamilton at the near post and he turned the ball back for Colin Viljoen, whose shot was deflected off a defender to Brian Talbot and he turned to send a glorious 12-yard drive into the net.

Luton, who had failed to register a win in their previous six games, were in a state of disarray by the time Town forged further ahead in the 29th minute.

Talbot broke from the edge of his own area, with Hatters' players claiming in vain that he had handled the ball, and found

Lambert in space.

Lambert in turn fed the ball out to Woods on the left flank and he got the better of John Ryan before crossing for Hamilton to head a simple, but perfectly worked, second goal.

A hamstring twinge forced Lambert off and his replacement, Eric Gates, proceeded to terrorise the Luton defence with a hand in Ipswich's third and fourth goals.

It was Gates who was upended by Ryan inside the box on the hour mark, enabling Talbot to powerfully convert from the spot, and when he was fouled just outside the area 10 minutes from time it was an invitation to Viljoen to float in the perfect free-kick for Trevor Whymark to rise and head home.

Luton, who enjoyed a good spell between Town's last two goals, finally earned themselves a consolation goal when Don Shanks crossed for Adrian Alston, who had played in that year's World Cup finals for Australia, to complete the scoring.

The Hatters' boss, Harry Haslam, was full of praise for Ipswich afterwards, stating: "They are a better team than Liverpool. Everybody works for each other; they knock the ball around well and they have the air of a side brimming with confidence."

Sadly, though, it was Derby County who finished the season as champions, with Liverpool second on goal average from Ipswich, although Town would have been runners-up had goal difference been the deciding factor.

A home defeat on Boxing Day by Luton actually cost Ipswich the title, so it was of little consolation that they boasted the best home record that season.

Two-goal Talbot was the only Ipswich-born player in the side,

although another seven of the players on duty – Laurie Sivell, George Burley, Kevin Beattie, Woods, Whymark, Lambert and Gates – were also products of the club's youth system.

Talbot might have been on his way to Bournemouth for a bargain fee had manager Robson not remembered a spot of advice from Ron Greenwood, the man he was to succeed as England manager in 1982.

"Never sell a player until you have seen him in the first team," he told Robson, who considered allowing Talbot to move to the south coast but quickly changed his mind once the former Tower Ramparts pupil replaced Norwich-bound midfielder Peter Morris.

Talbot went on to win England honours before sealing a £450,000 move to Arsenal in 1979 that allowed him to create an FA Cup record.

Having been in the Town side that defeated the Gunners at Wembley in 1978, Talbot became the first player to win the trophy in successive years with different clubs when he was in the Arsenal side that edged past Manchester United.

Recently sacked as manager of Oxford United, Talbot also had spells in charge of West Bromwich Albion, Rushden & Diamonds and Oldham Athletic.

He was only one of five players in the Town side at Luton who went on to become bosses – Burley, Hunter, Mick Mills and Bryan Hamilton being the others.

And just to confirm that times definitely have changed, on the same day that Town were winning handsomely at Luton, Colchester defeated Charlton Athletic 3-0 at Layer Road in a Third Division game!

Did you know that...

3 – Mick Mills has made most appearances for Ipswich Town with 741; John Wark made 678, Mick Stockwell 610, Paul Cooper 575 and George Burley 500.