

TOWN MOVE HIGHER IN THE TABLE

3229

THEY LAUGHED at Harry Haslam when the Town were struggling at the wrong end of the league table and he was still insisting that his side could claw its way back to the First Division at the first attempt.

But after taking care of a second promotion-chasing side at Kenilworth Road in four days by beating Southampton on Tuesday night, the Town now prepare to meet Bristol City on Saturday in the mood to collect another result that will wipe the smiles off a lot of faces.

Southampton came to Luton knowing that the game was vital for both sides. Their surprise defeat at York on Saturday should have given them an extra hunger for success. It didn't. They were forced to knuckle under, using brute strength and crude tackles for a time, then admitting defeat as the Town threatened to bury them under a load of goals in the closing stages.

Jim Husband, with a spectacular flying header from a corner by Brian Chambers, broke the deadlock in the 72nd minute, and the only grumble from the crowd was that again the Town had not collected all the goals they should have done.

But there were plenty of good things in the performance, with nothing better than the cool skill with which Paul Fletcher shackled the menace of Mike Channon.

Channon showed his flair, clever touches and deceptive speed. But it was matched step by step by Fletcher, and the England international escaped from the youngster only once.

Luckily for the Town, he rifled his low shot narrowly wide of the far post.

Otherwise, the only other real chance Southampton could create fell to Peter Osgood. He is now a shadow of the player he was, and he rolled his shot tamely at Keith Barber after the Town defence had allowed a free-kick from Rodrigues to thread its way through the middle.

The first half was patchy, with the Saints turning in sinners with some gruesome tackles which referee John Hunting allowed to pass

with no more than a few words of warning.

Rodrigues produced two crunching fouls to keep Town attacks at bay, got away with them, and then got booked for hands, which makes a mockery of the football law that demands a caution for ungentlemanly conduct.

But the Town kept their heads, and once more the youngsters, Lil Fuccillo and Andy King in particular, came up trumps.

Unfortunately both sides were playing a 4-2-2 formation, and the midfield became overcrowded, with constructive moves stifled

in a forest of bodies.

Too often both sides were reduced to the long ball game, by-passing the middle with optimistic punts downfield, and it needed a set piece to break the pattern.

The Town's biggest attacking threats had come from the hard running and fiery shooting of Steve Buckley, and the use of John Faulkner's heading power from free-kicks.

A corner, after 72 minutes, brought the goal that pushed the Town up into sixth place in the table. Brian Chambers swung it over perfectly from the left wing, and Jim Husband almost grew wings as he flung himself through the air to head the ball into the net with stunning pace and accuracy.

It was a fair reward for another all-action display by Husband, and it opened up the game and made it much more exciting to watch for the last 18 minutes.

Southampton tried to come forward more, but too many of their players seemed to have half a mind on their cup-tie with Bradford City on Saturday.

Chambers had pushed further forward with the Town attack, and Osgood did the same for South-



● Jim Husband launches himself into the goal area to head the Town's match-winner against Southampton.

Report: Brian Swain—Pictures: Harry Dobkin

THE TOP OF THE TABLE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	P
Bristol City	31	15	10	6	46	26	40
Bolton	30	16	8	6	48	28	40
Sunderland	30	17	5	8	47	29	39
Notts City	31	16	7	8	46	29	39
Southampton	31	16	5	10	54	37	37
LUTON	32	15	7	10	45	36	37
West Brom	30	13	10	7	33	27	36

ampton.

Turner, who had tipped over the bar a brilliant swerving volley by Fuccillo, found himself under near-permanent siege in the last quarter of the game.

Ron Fletcher was wide with a header from John Ryan's cross, and shots poured in from all angles and ranges.

And although Ron Fletcher scooped the ball over the bar from only six yards out to ruin an opening made by Chambers and Husband, that wasn't the worst miss of the night.

Osgood had that dis-honour all to himself: his shooting was so bad that he had earlier put a shot over the bar and over the Oak Road stand as well.

2-3-76 Players think about transfers

HEREFORD United, leaders of Division III, were yesterday discussing with the Town the possible transfer to them of Peter Spiring, who turned in some impressive performances while on a month's loan.

Hereford are keen to do a deal—but not keen to spend money, while the Town badly need to draw in cash rather than have the player continue on loan at Hereford.

Said Spiring: "I don't know what the outcome will be, but I wouldn't mind moving to Hereford permanently. I enjoyed playing there, and it is a very nice area."

John Seaman is also waiting for the clubs to sort something out after his loan period at Millwall ends this week. "It was nice to play in front of spectators again," he said, "and I wouldn't mind signing for Millwall."

Former skipper Bobby Thomson is also on the move. He flies to America tomorrow to sign for Hartford.

They want him as player-manager, which will be a permanent appointment, but if he decides against that he will sign for the season as a player.

Team that picks itself

TOWN manager Harry Haslam yesterday praised all his players for a "tremendous performance" against Southampton — and announced that the team which has already disposed of two promotion contenders will be kept together for Saturday's away match against top of the table Bristol City.

The news from Bristol yesterday was that the flu epidemic which forced the postponement of two matches this week

is now dying down, and the game with the Town is definitely on.

Ten players returned to training yesterday after being bedridden by the flu bug, but Trevor Tainton and Keith Fear caught flu this week, and seem certain to miss Saturday's game.

ASTON PLAYS IN RESERVES

WINGER John Aston returns to active soccer this afternoon when he plays for the Town Reserves in a Football Combination match at Kenilworth Road against Fulham Reserves, kick-off 2.30.

A knee injury kept him out of the league match against Sunderland on Saturday, and although he had recovered in time to be named as substitute for the Southampton match, the manager decided not to change his winning team.

Also in the side this afternoon are Matt Pollock and Peter Spiring, who has just returned from a month's loan at Hereford.

Team spirit in the Town dressing room is sky-high, and the manager said: "We were glad to hear the crowd get behind us the way they did on Saturday and Tuesday."

The Town should have a good following at Bristol City on Saturday. The road journey is quick and easy, down the M4, and supporters' coaches are being run.

They leave Dunstable at 9.30, Maple Road, Luton, at 10 am, and the fare is £1.75.

Match Details

LUTON TOWN 1, SOUTHAMPTON 0
Half-time: 0-0

TOWN: Barber, Ryan, Buckley, Faulkner, Paul Fletcher; Chambers, King, West Fuccillo; Husband, Ron Fletcher.

Sub: Aston, not needed.

SOUTHAMPTON: Turner, Rodrigues, Peach, Blythe, Bennett; Holmes, Fisher, Osgood, McCalliog; Channon, Stokes. Sub: Gilchrist, not used.

THE GOAL: Jimmy Husband, brilliant flying header from corner by Brian Chambers, 72 minutes.

REFEREE: John Hunting, Leicester: Allowed some gruesome tackling to go without a caution, then booked Rodrigues for hands.

ATTENDANCE: 13,737, and in good voice.

ENTERTAINMENT: All it needs is another goal or two.



● Southampton full-back Peter Rodrigues took no prisoners as the Saints fought to hold on to a point. Above, one of his scything tackles downs Lil Fuccillo to halt another Town attack.

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