

# UNBEATEN RUN BOOSTED BY WINNER IN LAST MINUTE

## Match Details

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

TOWN: Aleksic; Price, Buckley, Faulkner, Paul Fletcher; Chambers (Jones 75 minutes), Fuccillo, West; Husband, Ron Fletcher, Aston.  
HEREFORD: Hughes; Emery, Ritchie, Marshall, Jefferson; Lindsay, Carter, Briley; Spiring (Paine, 63 minutes), Davey, McNeil.

THE GOAL: Ron Fletcher, header from centre by John Aston, 89th minute.

ENTERTAINMENT: In very short supply, with the Town reduced to Hereford's level for long periods.  
REFEREE: Dennis Turner, Cannock; played no worse than either side.

ATTENDANCE: 6,737, including a good following from Luton.

BOOKINGS: John Faulkner for dissent, Roy Carter of Hereford for a "professional foul" trip on Steve Buckley as the Luton defender went for goal; Les Briley for a foul on Jim Husband.

BRIGHTEST SPOT: Victory put the Town into the Second Division's top three for the first time this season.

By BRIAN SWAIN  
Sports Editor

chances for each side. They produced one goal, one save, one clearance off the line and one "goal" disallowed for offside.

The one saving grace of a game that was heading for oblivion as a 0-0 draw was the quality of the winning goal.

It pointed out the contrast of the boredom that had gone before.

Perhaps I wanted too much. But if a team good enough for the First Division comes up against a side heading for oblivion

third, and with only one home win in six months, I felt the class difference should have shown.

But it didn't. Some reasons were clear. Hereford fought for all they were worth, even though they were not much of a footballing side. They showed tenacity and fighting spirit, and came close to saving a point.

### TERRIBLE

The pitch was terrible. Three hours before kick-off I thought the game would be off, with huge puddles rippling in the cold breeze. By kick-off time, several tons of sand had been poured on, leaving most of the pitch a lifeless, energy-sapping bog.

That, said the Town officials, played a major role in reducing the Town's abilities.

Perhaps so. But I shudder to think of what we might have seen if the opposition had been Liverpool or Manchester United.

The Town's first problem had arisen the day before the game. David Geddis had been suffering from a touch of tonsillitis, and was unfit to travel to Hereford.

That brought Ron Fletcher back into the team, with defender Graham Jones being drafted

in as substitute, and in the end that combination turned out to be the match-winner.

The first half produced just four incidents worthy of note—and two of those were bookings, Carter for tripping Steve Buckley and John Faulkner, for expressing dissent after Paul Fletcher was adjudged to have fouled McNeil.

Faulkner had a marvellous game in the centre of the Town's defence, with his strength and positive tackles and clearances the perfect complement to the more delicate skills of Paul Fletcher.

The game might have become a more attractive sight if Faulkner's header for goal in the first minute had got through. He went up to meet a corner by John Aston, beat everyone to the ball, and all but scored. But with the goalkeeper beaten, striker Dixie McNeil cleared off the line.

The game then settled into a tough outfield struggle, with honours even in midfield, and the Town taking care to make no slips in defence.

### WASTED

Hereford should have scored three minutes before half-time. Lindsay and Ritchie worked the ball



● Match-winning combination: Ron Fletcher, who headed the vital goal, with John Aston, who made the centre, in the background.

down the flank, finding their way past Paul Fletcher, and from Ritchie's cross Peter Spiring made a diving header.

Luckily for the Town he put it almost straight to Milija Aleksic, and thus wasted the chance.

The two midfield outfits cancelled each other out, and with Paul Price and Steve Buckley unable to get in many overlap runs the Town's front line looked more dangerous than Hereford's without being able to upset the home side's defensive composure.

Alan West and Ron Fletcher set up one neat move which worked the ball to John Aston on the flank. He rolled a pass into the path of Lil Fuccillo, only to see the ball blasted high over the bar from 25 yards.

McNeil wasted a similar chance at the other end, and Jim Husband had a header deflected wide after a corner by Aston.

The nearest the game came to bursting into life was in the last 20 minutes, starting with a Hereford "goal" being disallowed.

McNeil for once escaped the attentions of Faulkner and Paul Fletcher, and struck a low shot goalwards from the edge of the penalty area.

Aleksic parried the ball, and Davey swept the rebound into the net. Luckily for the Town, the linesman's flag had been raised for offside before the ball reached Aleksic, and after awarding a goal referee Dennis Turner changed his mind when he saw the flag.

### WIDE

Hereford, for the first time, looked the better team for a five-minute spell, and Carter put McNeil through. With Aleksic advancing and Paul Fletcher closing in fast, McNeil shot in a hurry and sent the ball wide.

For the last 15 minutes Jones played in place of Chambers, after Hereford had brought on Terry Paine for Spiring.

The Town's change turned out to be the more effective. Jones, normally a central defender, was a revelation in midfield, showing bite in the tackle good use of the ball, and a readiness to move up behind the front men and have a crack at goal.

They were all qualities which had not been too conspicuous earlier, and Jones nearly scored with a fierce cross-shot after being fed by Alan West. Hughes stretched well to tip the ball over the bar.

As the last minute approached Hereford seemed to have settled for a point and a lot of Town followers must have thought that a 0-0 draw was at least better than being beaten.

### GEM

But at long last the game was lifted out of its mediocrity by a gem of a goal.

Jones won the ball in midfield on the Town's right, saw Aston clear on the left, and measured his his long pass beautifully.

The 30-yard pass from Jones turned Hereford's defence and Aston took full advantage. As they swung round to face him he measured a centre of perfection, and defenders were stranded, facing each other instead of opponents as Ron Fletcher arrived to meet the centre.

### IMPACT

From somewhere near the penalty spot he met the ball with the full impact of a header which used every ounce of his body weight to direct the ball wide of Hughes.

It was a cracker, and perhaps there is the irony of the game as a whole—it was the sort of goal that would have beaten better defences than Hereford's.