

FIGHTING SPIRIT GIVES BOLTON A SURPRISE

THE TOWN MAY have lost out on promotion. But their own professional pride was salvaged in the last home game of the season when promotion-chasing Bolton Wanderers were forced to give up a point they needed more badly than the Town did.

Bolton looked promotion material in the first half, but were then forced to give ground as the Town battled their way back to equality in the second. David Geddis headed a superb equaliser, and the game developed into a battle resembling a cup-tie. Neither side was prepared to give in, and the result was that the fans were given a treat, with excitement in both goalmouths.

The Town's spirit shook Bolton, and long after the final whistle the Lancashire side were still full of praise for the side that had so nearly buried their promotion hopes.

Bolton had taken the lead in impressive style, with Peter Reid taking a short pass from Taylor, evading a tackle by Faulkner, and lashing in a cross-shot from the edge of the penalty area.

Roared on by an army of their supporters, Bolton settled down to try to build on the lead. Their play made it clear that one point would be welcome, but the real target was to get both.

The big central defence of Allardyce and Jones stopped up the Town's attacks down the middle, and John Aston's inability to spot

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colleagues in space helped to blunt the Town's thrusts.

Bolton went close to increasing their lead when Greaves put a header narrowly wide from a cross by Morgan, and the match turned into a rugged fight as the Town forced their way back into the reckoning.

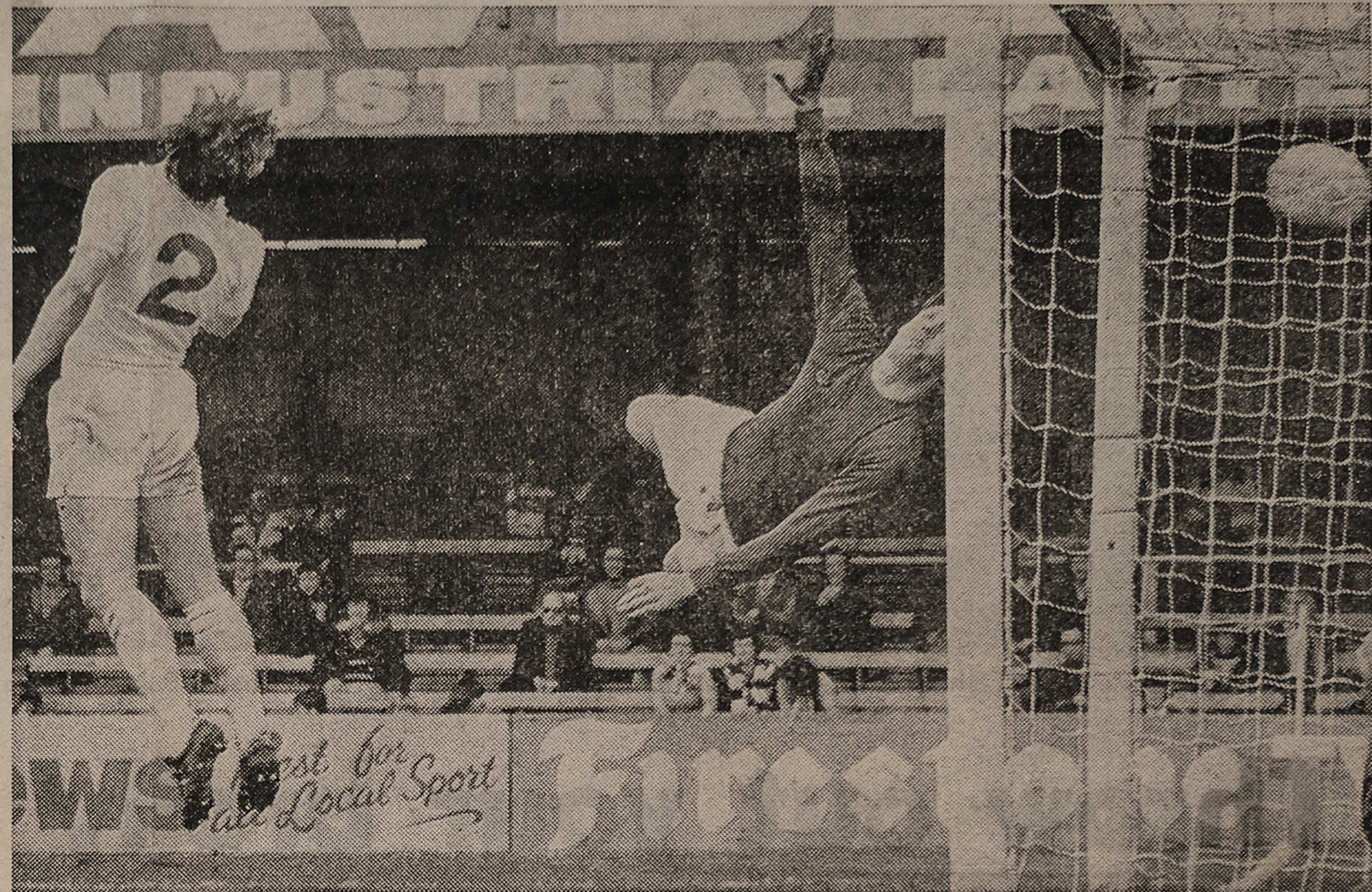
Greaves crunched into the pitch-side barrier after a tackle by Aston; Ritson was booked for a foul on Aston, and Taylor should have been booked for bringing down Steve Buckley.

Some of the tackles were barely the right side of robust, and referee Alf Grey had a hard time of it in trying to keep control.

The Town's midfield of Ricky Hill, Brian Chambers and Lil Fuccillo was unable to match the skills and accurate distribution of their Bolton counterparts. But they more than matched them in persistence and workrate, and slowly Bolton were forced to yield the initiative.

Jim McNichol, on his debut as Paul Futcher's stand-in, kept his head throughout to become one of the Town's best players, and even managed to produce the kind of super-confident calmness that marks Futcher's play with one clearance across the face of his own penalty area.

Steve Buckley and Paul Price had to concentrate on defence, but Buckley nearly managed an equaliser when Chambers sent him clear on an overlap. He charged 30 yards, then lost the ball on a bumpy patch near the



● **UP IN THE AIR:** Bolton goalkeeper Jim McDonagh and full-back John Ritson get airborne in vain attempts to reach the header by David Geddis which gave the Town a point at Kenilworth Road.

Match Details

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

TOWN: Aleksic; Price, Buckley, Faulkner, McNichol; Chambers, Hill, Fuccillo; Geddis, Husband, Aston.
Sub: Carr, not used.

BOLTON: McDonagh; Ritson, Nicholson, P. Jones, Allardyce; Greaves, Reid, Train, Morgan; Whatmore, Taylor. **Sub:** G. Jones, not used.

THE GOALS: Peter Reid for Bolton, eight minutes, brilliantly-taken left foot drive from edge of box; David Geddis for the Town, 48 minutes, header taken equally smartly from corner by John Aston.

ATTENDANCE: 11,164—it would have been even worse if Bolton had not brought a big following.

REFEREE: Alf Grey, Great Yarmouth: was given a difficult job by a handful of players, and did it well although sometimes allowed fouls to go unpunished.

BOOKING: John Ritson, of Bolton, for a foul on Aston.
ENTERTAINMENT: First class, with the Town's second-half fight-back producing a game of cup-tie endeavours and excitement.

edge of the penalty area.

Chambers missed a chance he should have taken when Jim Husband laid the ball back in the first minute of the second half, but in the 48th minute the Town got the equaliser they deserved.

Sloppy play by Morgan gave away a corner from an intended pass back to his keeper, and for once Allardyce and Jones were caught standing as Aston's centre went to the back of the penalty box. Geddis timed his jump to perfection, and sent the ball accurately into the top of the net.

Suddenly Bolton could see defeat facing them as the Town's confidence grew.

Husband, Geddis and Aston started to look sharper with every minute, but although the half-chances cropped up the final finish was absent.

McDonagh made a good catch under pressure from Husband after Aston had centred accurately, while Whatmore shot wide after Reid opened up the Town's left flank.

Bolton gathered them-

selves for the final fling near the end in which it seemed that at times there were ten Bolton shirts competing to get into the action.

Full-back Nicholson had a shot saved, and in a scramble after a corner Allardyce saw a header bundled away and Taylor had a shot deflected by McNichol over the bar.

Time ran out with Bolton still on the attack, and Willie Morgan summed it all up after the game: "We were amazed at the way Luton came back at us in the second half. On that performance they are one of the best sides in the division."

Manager Ian Greaves took the same view. "At half-time I thought we could hold Luton a bit longer, then probably go back and hit them with another goal.

"Luton had nothing to play for, we thought. But they didn't give up, did they? I suppose both sides will say they could have had the other point, but I give Luton full credit for making it such a hard game."