

SUPER-SOCCER GIVES FANS A TREAT

77/78

THE TOWN climbed to second place in the Second Division with their fourth victory on the trot against Fulham. And all round Kenilworth Road was an atmosphere of sheer delight at the quality of the football served up by both sides.

The first five-figure gate of the season had been attracted by the presence of George Best, but they stayed to marvel more at the midfield skills

of a confident Town side which deserved much more than a 1-0 win.

"If the crowd didn't enjoy that we might as well all give up," said Town boss Harry Haslam. "We showed them the lot — tremendous football skill and plenty of shots at goal.

"Their goalkeeper had a hell of a game, and but for him we must have got four or five."

Fulham manager Bobby Campbell agreed, and took pride in the part his team had played in an open and highly entertaining game.

"I'm not too disappointed with the result," he said. "The game was a victory for football, and if the crowds are given matches like this every week we will have no problem filling grounds.

"Luton deserved to win on balance. But we might have picked up a goal or two near the end when we had Luton pinned back. But football is a 90-minute game, and Luton certainly played very well for most of the match."

The Town's record poses a strange enigma—in the run of four consecutive wins they have notched eight goals, but only two have come from the strikers.

Report by Sports Editor Brian Swain
Action pictures by Ron Purves

"We're all strikers," was happy Harry's answer. "I'm not complaining about where the goals come from—with our attacking style, midfield men and defenders are all strikers."

The match-winner on Saturday was John Faulkner, racing up to meet an inswinging corner by Alan West, and heading the ball firmly into the bottom corner, under the foot of the covering defender.

The result was justice, but the goal was tough luck on Fulham goalkeeper Gerry Peyton, who stood alone between the Town and a goal glut.

Skipper West, always available in midfield, and laying-off some superb passes, gave the Town mastery in midfield, aided by some delightful touches by Ricky Hill and some hard running and shooting by Lil Fuccillo.

The Town defence was safe and sure for the first 80 minutes, with Faulkner

and Paul Futcher blocking the middle, and Paul Price and Steve Buckley ever dependable on the flanks.

Buckley is doing two jobs these days, with his speed down the left wing adding width and fearsome shooting power to the Town's attacks.

Price is often equally dangerous, though less dramatic, down the right, and while the Town's front-runners find themselves outnumbered more often than not, the back-up from the rear is a vital part of the attacking pattern.

It had to be against Fulham, because on the rare occasions when Jim Husband, Ron Futcher and Phil Boersma got clear they were beaten by last-minute tackles, great saves by Peyton, and off-target shooting.

None of the Town's best three shots came from the strikers: Hill smashed in a superb volley which Peyton saved with a dramatic

dive, Fuccillo blazed a 40-yard thunderbolt only a foot over the bar, and Paul Price hit a drive from the edge of the box which was on its way into the top corner before Peyton got airborne to palm it away.

Added to that the goalkeeper made a reflex save when the ball bounced off Boersma, made a spreading save at Boersma's feet, and was lucky to see Boersma slash a rebound chance way off target.

And the Town went close to paying a high price for the mixture of misses, because in the last ten minutes Fulham played their best football of the afternoon.

Best and Mahoney carved out a chance for John Margerrison, and he headed poorly, almost straight to Milija Aleksic, and in the last minute Tony Gale got in a header which clipped the top of the bar, although referee Brian Martin penalised him for pushing.

Match Details

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

TOWN: Aleksic; Price, Buckley, Faulkner, Paul Futcher; West, Hill, Fuccillo; Husband, Ron Futcher, Boersma. Sub: Heale, not used.

FULHAM: Peyton; Evans, Strong, Howe, Lacy; Gale, Margerrison, Evanson; Best, Mitchell, Mohoney. Sub: Bullivant, not used.

THE GOAL: John Faulkner, 36 minutes, header from a corner by Alan West.

ATTENDANCE: 12,736, the Town's best so far this season.

REFEREE: Brian Martin, Keyworth: firm and fair throughout, although Fulham felt he was harsh when he booked Evanson.

ENTERTAINMENT: Tremendous. Even Bobby Campbell, the losing manager and a Scotsman, admitted that he would happily have paid to see such a game. It was a credit to both sides.

BOOKING: John Evanson, for a foul on Paul Price.



● **JOHN FAULKNER'S FIRST LEAGUE GOAL FOR 18 MONTHS:** Above, the Town's senior player gets in to send his header goalwards from Alan West's corner kick.