

OWN GOAL IS A GIFT MILLWALL DETAILS FOR MILLWALL

MILLWALL 1, LUTON TOWN 0

Half-time: 0-0

BRIAN SWAIN'S VERDICT: ★ ★

TOWN: Aleksic; Price, Jones, McNichol, Paul Futcher; Hill, West, Fuccillo (Ingram, 80 minutes); Stein, Ron Futcher, Boersma.

MILLWALL: Johns; Donaldson, Moore, Kitchener, Hazell; Allen, Walker, Mehmet; Lee, Seasman (Pearson, 84 minutes), Hamilton.

THE GOAL: Paul Price, own goal, 63rd minute, the first of his career, trying to head clear a free-kick by Hazell. ATTENDANCE: 7,334, and the vast majority Millwall supporters who did all they could to cheer on their team in its battle against relegation.

REFEREE: Tony Glasson, Salisbury—added to the tension by never allowing the advantage rule.

BOOKING: Graham Jones for a foul on Seasman. Only his third booking of the season, but it takes him to 20 points because of a sending-off in a reserve match, and will mean that he will miss the start of next season.

ENTERTAINMENT: Spoiled by Millwall's anxiety and inability to settle down to play real football. The Town did, but failed to finish the job when they should have swamped Millwall with goals as well as pressure.

TO COMPLETE an unsatisfactory four-day spell, the Town went down to their second consecutive defeat at The Den on Tuesday to a desperate Millwall team which they killed but didn't bury.

The Londoners, technically inferior in every department, were in danger of being taken to the cleaners as the Town's more enterprising football took command, but just when the Town looked most dangerous the game was decided by a freak own goal.

A long free-kick by Tony Hazell pinged into the crowded penalty area and the ball was deflected on to Paul Price's head and bounced into the net.

It happened in the 63rd minute, when ragged Millwall were showing every sign of sliding further towards

By BRIAN SWAIN
Sports Editor

the Third Division. The Town, relaxed and composed while Millwall tried and failed to do everything at breakneck speed, were beaten by nothing more than honest toil and fighting spirit.

The mystery was how Millwall had stayed in the game so long. In the early stages the pace of John Seasman and Irish international Bryan Hamilton posed problems for Graham Jones and Jim McNichol, but with Paul Futcher producing another brilliant display the Town rearguard settled into an effective unit again.

Millwall depended on village green football, with long clearances from defence pumped upfield in the hope that a forward would get there

first and receive some sort of inspiration when he did.

The Town, by contrast, were careful and patient in their build-up, using the midfield well, and always prepared to probe for weaknesses in the Millwall defence.

Although big Barry Kitchener was not always able to tie down Ron Futcher, Millwall survived through the lack of punch by Town attackers in the penalty area.

Ricky Hill unleashed a ferocious bender which curved narrowly the wrong side of the post, and Ron Futcher looped a header weakly over the bar.

He also produced the shot of the match, a thumping drive after smooth work by Alan West and Brian Stein. Goalkeeper Nicky Johns didn't see the ball until it hit him on the shoulder and bounced to safety.

Futcher pushed another header wide from a cross by Price, and as the Town got right on top in the second half Millwall looked down and out.

But the game turned inside out when Jones, deputising for David Carr, was penalised and booked for a clumsy tackle on Seasman.

Hazell was true to Millwall form—he whacked the ball goalwards, and blind faith and hope paid off, with Price unwittingly heading the first own goal of his career to give Millwall their fourth consecutive league win.

Lil Fuccillo almost saved a point with a vicious dipper from 20 yards which Johns did well to save, but with the goal to buck them up Millwall were back into the game with a vengeance.