

HOMework PROVES A POINT FOR OLDHAM

THE TOWN paid the price of their own success when a basic but efficient Oldham team battled for 90 minutes to take a point from Kenilworth Road by becoming the first visiting team this season to keep a clean sheet.

The Town's lack of sharpness in the box and a controversial refereeing decision played a part in the failure to break through, but Oldham centre-half Kenny Clements put his finger on the major reason for the result after the game.

Newly signed from Manchester City for £200,000, he told me: "The lads remembered only too well that Luton stuck six past them a year ago, and we were determined not to let that happen again.

"We knew that Luton still play open attacking stuff, and we concentrated on

Report
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cutting out the service to Hatton and Stein.

"I had to attack the ball, get there before they did, with John Hurst picking up the bits and pieces. Ian Wood had to stop David Moss, and we thought there was always a chance that we could pinch a result with a sneaky goal in the second half."

Oldham's tactics did little to provide entertainment, but they buckled down to their task with a will.

They showed some early tigerish tackling, with Tony Grealish, Ricky Hill, Brian Stein and Bob Hatton all taking knocks.

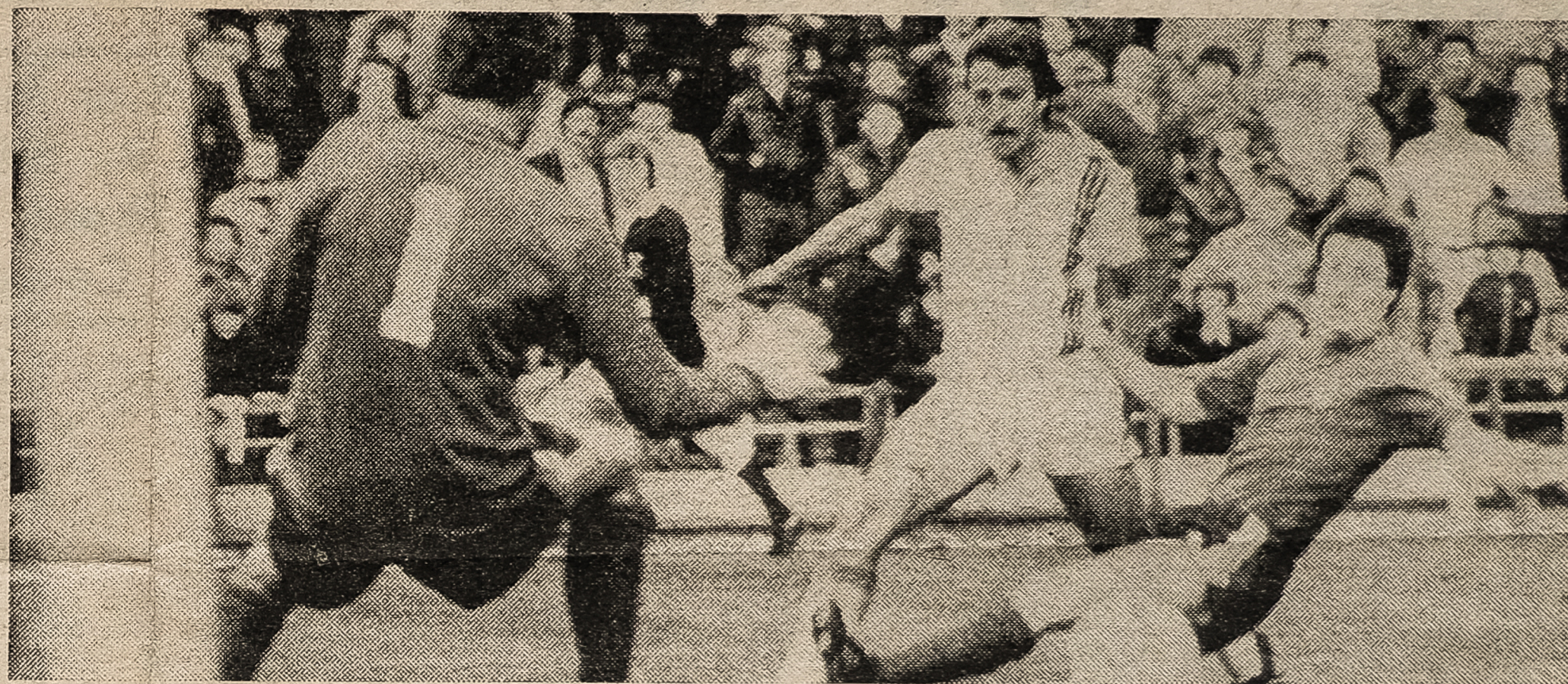
Hill's thigh injury forced him out of the action in the 52nd minute, to make way for Mark Aizlewood, but each mid-field had cancelled out the other by then.

The Town did much more attacking, but the match statistics disclosed how they helped Oldham—out of 20 strikes at goal 16 were off target, and goal-keeper Peter McDonnell did not have a single difficult save to make.

There was a string of near misses, and three in particular stick in the memory—two when Stein and Moss cracked drives off target from good positions, and one when the best move of the game deserved better than its end product.

Jake Findlay saved from Keegan, and quickly threw the ball out to Alan West. With Oldham stretched, his pass sent Hatton racing through the middle. He veered away from McDonnell's despairing challenge, but found himself angled, and with Stein waiting for the cross Hatton shot wide of the near post.

Oldham's other big scare came when Hurst tackled Stein just after the interval as the Luton man attacked the goal.



● **CUT OFF:** David Moss, singled out by Oldham as one of the Town's most dangerous attackers, is close-marked out of another chance to go for goal.

Oldham hearts missed a beat or two, and Town manager David Pleat thought it was a foul. But the penalty claims were turned down by Leicester referee Peter Reeves and Oldham were able to continue their safety-first tactics.

They worked hard, and occasionally looked lively as Vic Halom made his presence felt in midfield. The Town seemed to give up that area at times, content to probe with long passes, which is not the way they play best.

"We didn't play into mid-field the way we can," agreed the manager. "And we were not supporting attackers as well as we can."

"But our defence looked very strong again, and looked good as a unit. We didn't lose, and we are still near the top of the league."

"It was the third consecutive game in which we did not concede a goal, and if we had got a couple of vital breaks we would have won, but we didn't look sharp enough."

Match Details

LUTON TOWN 0, OLDHAM 0 79/80

TOWN: Findlay; Stephens, Donaghy, Saxby, Price; Grealish, Hill (Aizlewood, 52 mins.), West; Stein, Hatton, Moss.

OLDHAM: McDonnell; Wood, Edwards, Clements, Hurst; Hilton, Keegan, Halom; Steele, Stainrod, Heaton. Sub: Atkinson, not used.

GOAL ATTEMPTS: Town 16 off target and four saved; Oldham six off target and three saved.

ATTENDANCE: 8,711, who did their best to urge the Town on.

ENTERTAINMENT: Not very good, with little midfield finesse, too much long ball by the Town, and Oldham happy to settle for a point.

REFEREE: Peter Reeves, Leicester. Town players were convinced he chickened out when he refused penalty claims when Hurst brought down Stein.

BOOKINGS: Hurst for kicking the ball away at a free kick; Clements for a foul on Hatton.