

Thankful for small mercies

LUTON TOWN 1, SHREWSBURY 1

Half-time: 0-1

3440

A HOME point against Shrewsbury on Saturday was greeted by manager David Pleat with more pleasure than a lot of the supporters felt. Steve White sneaked a late equaliser which was as scrappy as the rest of the game, and the manager said: "When you are having a bad time you are thankful for small mercies."

Entertainment was in short supply, particularly in the first half. Shrewsbury, behind the Town in goal difference only, were delighted with the draw, even if it did leave them in the Second Division's bottom three.

Nerves and tension got in the way of flowing football and in a first half short of goalmouth excitement the Town were hit at the worst possible moment. Ian Atkins found space down Shrewsbury's right to pick up a throw-in and hammer the ball low into the goalmouth. Player-manager Graham Turner dived in bravely to head a goal from close range 20 seconds before half-time.

With the crowd getting restless, the Town's frantic attempts to fight back took half an hour to succeed. Kirk Stephens had a shot tipped onto and over the bar, and Tony Grealish forced his way through a packed defence but then shot wide.

It looked the sort of day when nothing would come right, but a 75th-minute corner by David Moss at last opened up the Shrewsbury defence. White forced the ball in from close range, and for a brief spell after that the first victory in five attempts looked possible.

When shots were on target Bob Wardle saved well from White and Grealish, and Shrewsbury also went close in the last ten minutes. John Dungworth let rip with a cracking volley and Jake Findlay made the best save of the match to push the ball round the post.

MATCH DETAILS

TOWN: Findlay; Stephens, Aizlewood, Goodyear, Price; Grealish, Hill; Donaghy; Stein, White, Moss. Sub: Antic, not used.

SHREWSBURY: Wardle; King, Leonard, Griffin, Larkin (Lindsay, 77 mins); Turner, Tong, Atkins; Biggins, Dungworth, Cross.

THE GOALS: Graham Turner for Shrewsbury, 44 minutes; Steve White for the Town, 75 minutes.

OTHER GOAL ATTEMPTS: Town eight saved and 11 wide; Shrewsbury three saved and eight off target.

REFEREE: Dan Vickers, Ilford.

ATTENDANCE: 8,014.

ENTERTAINMENT: Picked up a little in the second half. It needed to.

BOOKINGS: Mal Donaghy and Kirk Stephens for fouls; John Dungworth of Shrewsbury for kicking the ball away to delay a free kick.



EQUALISER: Steve White's goal against Shrewsbury, from a near post corner by David Moss.
Picture: JOHN SHORTHOUSE.