

Sports News

1 Pack closes the gap

AVERAGING a point per game, the Town are tenth in the Second Division with 22 points, six points adrift of the nearest promotion place. The chasing pack edged closer to the three top teams because two of them lost and one drew.

West Ham pulled three points clear of their closest rivals at the top with a 0-0 draw with Blackburn at Ewood Park, while second-placed Chelsea and third-placed Notts County both lost 0-2.

Chelsea's failure at Grimsby was their second away defeat of the season, and leaves them with 29 points. Notts County, the former leaders, went down to their first home defeat of the season, against Oldham, who had not previously won away. Those of us who have seen Oldham now know for sure that County's promotion aspirations are imagined rather than real.

Shrewsbury, who entertain the Town tomorrow night, lost at Orient, where former England winger Peter Taylor got the only goal of the game.

Down at the bottom, Bristol Rovers look dead already: their 4-1 thrashing at Sheffield Wednesday leaves them with 11 points from 22 matches, seven adrift of the nearest safety spot.

Match Details

LUTON TOWN 4, PRESTON N.E. 2
Half-time: 1-0

TOWN: Findlay; Stephens, Aizlewood, Saxby (Antic, 70 mins); Price; Hill, Fuccillo, Donaghy; Stein, Ingram, Moss.

PRESTON: Tunks; Taylor, Westwell, Anderson, Baxter; Burns, Bell, Doyle; Elliott, Bruce, McGee (Sayer, 73 mins).

THE GOALS: David Moss twice for the Town—penalty, 42 minutes, after Brian Taylor handled Ricky Hill's cross; and cracking volley from Lil Fuccillo's pass, 48 minutes; Fuccillo 69 minutes, well-placed shot from Ingram's pass; Godfrey Ingram, 81 minutes, pile-driver and goal of the match, hammered in after beating two men for speed from Moss's long through-ball; Steve Elliott, 52 minutes, for Preston, from left wing cross; Alex Bruce for Preston, 85 minutes, from cross by Peter Sayer, who looked offside to some of us when he made his run.

OTHER GOAL ATTEMPTS: Town 16 saved and eight off target; Preston five saved and six wide.

ATTENDANCE: 7,874—first league gate below 8,000 this season at Kenilworth Road, and nearly 4,000 down on the corresponding match last season, when the Town were pushing for promotion.

ENTERTAINMENT: Rousing stuff, particularly in the last 25 minutes, with Preston's willingness to attack helping to make it an open game.

REFEREE: Michael Bidmead—had a very good game, but tended to get in the way too much, and was knocked out for two minutes when he stopped a Mark Aizlewood clearance from five yards with his right ear.



● **DOUBLE UP:** David Moss hammers his second goal

Town Match Verdict ★★★★★

FANS AND LIL GET A GOAL TONIC

JUST a couple of months ago this column was one long moan about a quite awful football match staged by Preston and Luton Town at Deepdale.

Today, it is a pleasure to report that the same two clubs got together at Kenilworth Road to give the customers a treat. Six goals scored may make coaches and managers wince and worry about defensive shortcomings, but if football is to beat the recession, this was the kind of entertainment that can save it.

We had to wait a long time for the real quality, but when it did arrive it was memorable for all sorts of reasons. The best of all was that killer goal, to make it 3-1 to the Town after Preston had threatened to pull back to 2-2, which came from Lil Fuccillo.

He has come through a personal crisis that has beaten many a lesser man, working and training on his own for two long years to overcome two broken legs.

REWARD

The very fact that he was in the side again—replacement for the injured Tony Grealish—was a tribute to his determination and persistence. And his all-important goal, shot home from the edge of the penalty area in the 69th minute, was just reward for a player who faced enforced early retirement exactly two years ago.

And if we share Lil's delight, it could hardly have been greater than Godfrey Ingram's—his pass made it possible, and the 21-year-old striker followed up with the goal of

REPORT BY BRIAN SWAIN PICTURES BY NIGEL WIGGLESWORTH

the match 12 minutes later.

Transfer-listed and told that a change of club would do him good, he was called into the side for the first time this season because Steve White was injured, and like Fuccillo he looked better the longer the game went on.

His talent and speed are undoubted. His weakness is often said to be lack of heart for the physical battering forwards have to take. That weakness was nowhere to be seen when he lashed in the Town's fourth goal, with a tremendous shot from the edge of the penalty area. Defender Mick Baxter towered over him as he controlled David Moss's through pass, but Ingram held him off beautifully before unleashing a devastating shot.

Those two goals settled a match which until then had been fairly even.

VITAL

The Town took a long time to settle into an effective pattern, mainly because David Moss was slow in starting. Doyle and Bell kept Preston in the game in midfield, but the deadlock was broken at a vital moment, three minutes before half-time.

Ricky Hill, who had another splendid match, surged down the right wing as the Town counter-attacked after a Preston thrust, and Brian Taylor handled his cross. He was booked, and Moss scored from the penalty.

Take Findlay brought off an important save early in the second half to tip a drive by Bruce round the post, before Moss hammered his tenth goal of the season in the 48th minute—a marvellous volley from a pass by Fuccillo.

LEAD CUT

To their credit, Preston played with three men in attack and the Town's defence was never com-



● **CELEBRATION:** Lil Fuccillo, playing his first game for two years, marks his return with the Town's vital third goal. Keeper Roy Tunks is grounded, and Lil turns in triumph. It was his first league goal since he got both for the Town in a 3-2 defeat at Orient in October 1978.

pletely at ease, and the lead was cut to a single goal when Doyle made space on the Town's right for a long centre which Steve Elliott flicked into the net on the near post.

Preston manager Nobby Stiles said later that if Bell had accepted a chance a few minutes later Preston could well have taken at least a point.

Instead, the attempted recovery was stifled by Fuccillo's goal, which signalled a marvellous spell by the Town.

Mike Saxby introduced a sour note when he was substituted immediately after Fuccillo's goal, stalking off the pitch in evident anger. I had some sympathy—the No 4 card was being held aloft shortly before that, so Fuccillo would have been taken off except for his goal.

PURPOSE

Raddy Antic joined the fray, and introduced more variety and purpose to a midfield which was already going pretty well, and Preston were close to disintegration.

Brian Stein turned on a dazzling mixture of speed and ball control to be one of several contenders for the man-of-the-match title. One turn in particular, in which he left two defenders and the goalkeeper baffled and beaten, deserved a goal, but his shot, aimed for the top corner, carried a few inches too high.

ENGULFED

Tunks had to make a series of desperate saves as the Town's attacks all but engulfed the Preston defence, and Ingram's super-goal nine minutes from time was the least the Town deserved.

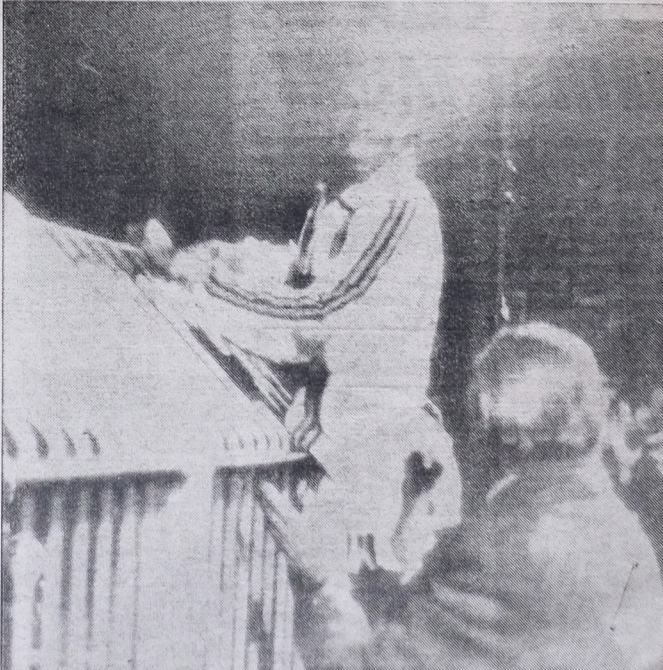
Preston battled to the last, and pulled another goal back with a quick break in the 85th minute. Substitute Peter Sayer looked offside to me, but was allowed to go down the right-wing and deliver a centre for Alex Bruce to make it 4-2.

The defeat dumped Preston into the Second Division's bottom three for the first time this season, but manager Stiles took consolation from the fact that the customers had been entertained.

"We worked hard and created chances, but so did Luton and they snapped them up as well," he said.



● **NEARLY:** Goalkeeper Tunks gets close to save from Moss.



● **CLIMBING HIGH:** Godfrey Ingram climbs the fence to show his delight at scoring the goal of the match, his first at home in the Football League