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CUP-TIE REVENGE BID SPARKED BY LEAGUE

FAILURE

THE SMALL consolation from the Town's surprise home defeat by Newcastle was that the Geordies must have learned very much less about the Town's play than David Pleat did about theirs.

When the teams meet again in the FA Cup at St James's Park on Saturday there is every reason to hope that the Town can exact revenge for a league defeat which may be the end of their promotion challenge.

Manager Pleat and his players refuse to concede defeat in the promotion race, but he was realistic enough to admit that his side now needs a long consistent run of good results, home and away, to pull themselves into the top three.

Both managers declared that the league game would have no bearing on the cup tie, and football history is littered with strange sequences in which one team's success is followed soon after by failure against the same opponents — remember Nottingham Forest being crushed at Kenilworth Road in 1959, just before the Cup Final?

Report by Brian Swain. Pictures by Nigel Wigglesworth

selves until the second half.

Newcastle looked to be the sort of team equipped to play better away than at home, always willing to defend in numbers and counter-attack with care.

DEFLECTED

Their first attack settled the points. Right back Steve Carney sent a low pass across the edge of the Town penalty area, Ken Wharton dummied, and Mick Harford was in space to score with a low shot which was deflected past Jake Findlay's dive by Mal Donaghy's attempted block.

Stein was unlucky to see a header from a corner by Moss cleared off the line by Harford, but Findlay saved the Town further embarrassment with a fine double save from Bobby Shinton and Chris Waddle.

BLOCKED

The Town looked a far better outfit when they attacked the Oak Road end in the second half. Alan West put Ingram through for a shot which rose just too high, and Boam blocked an effort by Ricky Hill which might have caused problems for Newcastle goalkeeper Kevin Carr.

The goalkeeper made a vital save in the 62nd minute when Boam's only mistake allowed Stein to get past him, but was lucky to escape when Kirk Stephens beat the offside trap with a lob, followed through and then chipped the goalkeeper. Unfortunately the height was just right, but the direction wasn't.

Carr completed his day of personal glory in the

68th minute. He went down after a challenge by Peter Johnson, and Newcastle complained bitterly when a penalty was given.

We have seen clearer penalties denied, but Carr made the arguments superfluous by saving the spot kick—David Moss's second failure this season.

Moss thought the goalkeeper moved early. Probably he did. Carr said: "I waited to see which way I thought it would go. He hit it hard, but it was high as well, and that makes it easier for a goalkeeper."

TOO BIG

The penalty miss seemed to convince everyone in the ground, players included, that this wasn't to be the Town's day. Their normal style and enthusiasm as not quite there, and a succession of high and hopeful crosses simply played into Newcastle's hands, with Boam much too big and strong to be beaten by Stein or Ingram.

Lil Fuccillo went on for the last 12 minutes as sub for Ingram, but the feeling of desolation had already overtaken events, Town players, and supporters.

KIDDED?

My hope now is on two counts: Newcastle may have been kidded by the ease with which they got through in defence and midfield, and on their own patch they cannot afford to sit back and defend much.

"It will be a completely different game," said Newcastle manager Arthur Cox, talking about the need for his players to forget the league result when they prepare for the cup tie. He's dead right.

SHOCK FOR THE CONFIDENT FANS

THE TOWN'S home defeat shook their supporters—and wrecked the club's competition to forecast some of the match details. The prize of a £500 voucher for Wallspace bedroom furniture has been put on ice, because not one entry forecast a Newcastle victory.

The club has decided to give the competition another run, probably for the away match at Wrexham, with an entry coupon appearing in the Luton News and in the match programme for the home game with Blackburn on February 7.



● MISSED: Goalkeeper Kevin Carr stretches to make the penalty save which prevented David Moss from scoring an equaliser for the Town.

Match Details

LUTON TOWN 0, NEWCASTLE UTD 1
Half-time: 0-1

TOWN: Findlay; Stephens, Price, Donaghy, Aizlewood; Hill, Grealish, West; Stein Ingram (Fuccillo 78 mins); Moss.

NEWCASTLE: Carr; Carney, Halliday, Boam, Johnson; Martin, Trewick, Wharton; Shinton, Harford, Waddle. Sub: Walker, not used.

THE GOAL: Mick Harford nine minutes, 18-yard shot deflected into corner by Mal Donaghy, after Ken Wharton sold the Town defence a neat dummy from Steve Carney's low cross.

OTHER GOAL ATTEMPTS: Town four saved, four wide, plus a penalty saved; Newcastle four saved and two off target.

ENTERTAINMENT: Some way below recent standards, although the Town began to look a lot better in the second half, attacking the Oak Road end.

ATTENDANCE: 10,774—better than the average.

REFEREE: Howard Taylor, Oadby, Leicester: had a bit of an off day, starting at 8.30 am when he decided he needed another two and a half hours to decide the pitch was playable. Fans in Newcastle waiting for news didn't appreciate that too much. Those who came didn't appreciate the penalty he gave the Town either. ONE FOR THE SCRAPBOOK: It was the last day for yellow and red cards and three times the yellow was flashed: Steve Carney for a foul on David Moss; Mark Aizlewood for tripping Harford; Harford for kicking the ball away to delay a free kick.

Losing the big chance

ON A DAY when not one of the Second Division's top ten teams managed a victory, the Town's ninth defeat of the season dropped them one place in the league table, to seventh.

They are now three points short of third place, and three teams above them have games in hand. The price of home failure in the last two games was high — if both had been won the Town would be joint third today.

West Ham kept on course for the championship with a 1-1 draw at Notts County, and County moved up into third place with that point.

They are level on points with Swansea, beaten 3-1 at Cambridge, and ahead of Chelsea, who have for-

gotten what a goal looks like, and who lost 0-1 at QPR.

Derby County's match at Bolton was frozen off, and Blackburn overtook the Town to take sixth place with a 1-1 draw at Shrewsbury.

The Town's defeat allowed Grimsby and Cambridge to draw level with them on points, with Cambridge having two games in hand.

The Second Division's top ten:

	P	W	D	L	F	A	P
West Ham	27	16	7	4	45	23	39
Swansea	27	11	10	6	41	30	32
Notts Co	26	10	12	4	29	25	32
Chelsea	27	11	9	7	38	25	31
Derby	26	11	9	6	40	33	31
Blackburn	26	10	10	6	28	21	30
LUTON TOWN	27	11	7	9	39	33	29
Grimsby	27	9	11	7	28	24	29
Cambridge	25	13	3	9	32	31	29



FOILED: Brian Stein has the ball taken off his toes by a goalkeeper well protected by defenders. Harford working Mal Donaghy is the other Town player in the Newcastle goal area.