A chance to make history

Sports

News

WITH 24 more points to play for, the Town are down to tenth place in the Second Division, with 32 points from 30 matches, in a table which has five teams jostling for third place.

PROMOTION NEEDS A MANAGER DAVID PLEAT put on a brave face for the after-match meeting with Pressmen after Grimsby's teamwork and enthusiasm snuffed out the Town's talent advantage at Kenilworth Road. The Mariners inflicted the Town's fourth home defeat of the season, and have almost certainly sunk the Town's promotion chances.



Chance, even if it is getting r
Unfortunately h is
players' actions fell far
short of their ambition,
and most Town supporters have now accepted that the great
adventure into the First
Division has to be postponed for another year.
On the form against
Grimsby, the Town
would not be good
enough, and only a miraculous run can push aculous run can push them back into conten-

PRIORITY

Having stung his men with that, he followed up with the instruction to go out and play for each other, and make teamwork the day's priority.

They did exactly as told, and earned their just reward.

The Town looked observed

PINCHED

REPORT BY BRIAN SWAIN PICTURES BY MARK RICHARDS

with their deft footwork against Clive Wigginton and Kevin Moore.

Ingram forced Batch to make two saves, but the Town's early confidence drained away when Grims-by pinched a goal on the break in the 24th minute.

Joe Waters was given too much space in midfield, and threaded a pass from right to left on the edge of the penalty area. Cumming compensated for his earlier miss by scoring with a low drive which was deflected by Mark Aizlewood's heel on its way under Jake Findlay's body into the net.

Batch made another

Batch made another good save, this time from Moss, to preserve the lead at half-time, while Cumming blazed an opening wide after a mis-kick by Mal Donaghy.

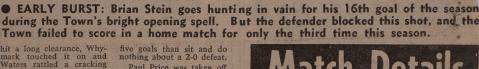
FADED

Moss tried his luck on both wings with minimal success. Grimsby's hard work gave them control of midfield, and the Town's front line faded as Wiggin-ton and Moore closed up the middle of the Grimsby defence.

defence.

Grimsby defended in numbers, but rarely looked like being hustled into mistakes, and they got the decisive goal six minutes into the second half.

Left back Dean Crombie



hit a long clearance, Why-mark touched it on and Waters rattled a cracking 25-yard shot into the far corner from the inside left position.

GAMBLE

It took the Town another 20 minutes to get organised again, Grimsby, to noone's surprise, pulled back and defended well, and when the Town did get forward the attacks lacked width and shots failed to make goalkeeper Batch work for his living.

With 17 minutes to go the Town manager took a gamble, and at least showed that he would rather go down by four or

five goals than sit and do nothing about a 2-0 defeat.

Paul Price was taken off and Steve White put on as an additional striker, and his hustle and bustle at last injected life into the front line.

NEARLY

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The gamble nearly paid off in the 81st minute when White made a determined run on goal and looked like scoring. He got past the goalkeeper but was stopped by a desperate tackle by Moore, and as White tried to hit the rebound home Batch punched the ball away for a corner. A goal then might have provided the springboad for a point-saving finale, but Grimsby deserved to hold on to win. In fact as the Town stretched themselves with the accent on attack cooler finishing at the other end could have brought a couple more, with Kevin Drinkell and Wigginton missing chances they ought to have taken.

LUTON TOWN 0, GRIMSBY 2
Half-time: 0-1

TOWN: Findlay; Stephens, Price (White, 73 mins), Donaghy, Aizlewood; Hill, Grealish, West; Stein, Ingram, Moss.

GRIMSBY: Batch; Stone, Wigginton, Moore, Crombie; Waters, Brolly, Mitchell; Whymark, Drinkell (Kilmore, 88 mins), Cumming.

THE GOALS; Bob Cumming, 24 minutes, deflected shot after good run and pass by Joe Waters; Waters, 51 minutes, cracking 25-yard drive after long ball out of defence by Dean Crombie and touch-on by Trevor Whymark.

detence by Dean Crombie and touch-on by Trevol Whymark.

OTHER GOAL ATTEMPTS: Town 12 saved and six off target; Grimsby one saved and 14 wide, Corners; 5-3 to the Town.

REFEREE: Ron Challis, Tonbridge — not as good as his reputation, particularly in watching for linesmen's signals. But his wasn't the worst off-day.

ATTENDANCE: 9,217 — only Shrewsbury had a lower second Division gate.

ENTERTAINMENT: Reasonable for the first 20 minutes and for the last 15, but only Grimsby supporters enjoyed the rest.

CHOKER: This was the Town's fourth home defeat of the season, and is probably the one that finishes their promotion hopes for this season, David Pleat hasn't given up, though.



LATE FLOURISH: Steve White went on as sub in a calculated gamble to boost the attack while taking off defender Paul Price. ABOVE: Goalkeeper Nigel Batch recovers well to stop the Town striker getting in a free shot after a determined run on goal. RIGHT: the build-up to the final effort, with White getting past the goalkeeper, only to be stopped by a tackle from Kevin Moore.

