

HILL'S WINNER...



● ON ITS WAY: Ricky Hill leaves Willie Young beaten and places his shot into the net for the Town's winner at the City Ground.

Match Details

NOTTINGHAM FOREST 0

LUTON TOWN 1

Half-time: 0-1

TOWN: Findlay; Stephens, Elliott, Goodyear, Donaghy; Hill, Horton, Turner, Moss; Walsh, White. Sub: Daniel, not needed.

FOREST: Sutton; Anderson, Young, Todd, Swain; Bowyer, Wilson, Hodge, Walsh (Davenport, 70 mins); Wallace, Birtles.

THE GOAL: Ricky Hill, 13 minutes, solo run and crisp shot after robbing Willie Young in midfield.

OTHER GOAL ATTEMPTS: Town two saved, one hit a post, eight wide. Forest four saved, five wide. Corners: 12-3 to Forest.

ENTERTAINMENT: Fascinating contest. Forest had plenty of possession and put on lots of pressure, but couldn't make it count against a solid defence and midfield, with the Town also looking sharper on the counter-attack.

REFEREE: Neville Ashley, Nantwich—The Town thought he was too strict with the bookings, but they'll all stick.

BOOKINGS: Paul Elliott, Kirk Stephens, Clive Goodyear and Brian Horton, all for fouls.

ATTENDANCE: 14,387—better than three First Division games on the same day, but Forest's lowest since Watford went there to be beaten in September.

OLD NEWS: Jake Findlay was felled when hit on the back of the head by a 2p coin thrown from behind his goal.

GOOD NEWS: Forest supporters put the finger on the culprit, the whole ground applauded, and a 32-year-old customer was under arrest while Findlay was still receiving attention.

THE most famous mouth in football was silenced at Nottingham Forest when Luton Town inflicted a home defeat on a club which was the best in Europe not so long ago.

Forest boss Brian Clough

drove away from the ground before his players had got out of the bath. He barely spoke to his own chairman, let alone the press or David Pleat, a man who has always seen Clough as a manager to be emulated.

For the first time this season, the Town kept a second consecutive clean sheet, and although the one-goal victory margin kept their followers on edge for an hour Forest could not have complained if it had been 3-0 or 4-0.

Forest's twin strikeforce of Garry Birtles and Ian Wallace, who cost a million pounds each, was snuffed out by a back four which cost a tenth of what Clough paid, and even Forest fans were applauding the Town's football.

"What a load of rubbish" was the chant at Forest, who threatened so much

REPORT BY BRIAN SWAIN
PICTURES: MARK RICHARDS

and delivered so little in the way of finishing power. Ricky Hill's skills—he showed everything from defensive tackling to ball juggling, perceptive passing and the decisive striking power Forest lacked—had the home fans drooling.

"Swap him with any one of our midfielders and we'd beat you by a street," said a jealous Forest reporter and supporter in the Pressbox.

BETTER

Yet Hill was only one of half a dozen who proved to be better on the day than their opposite numbers. The difference, for instance, between Paul Elliott and Willie Young, was a major reason for the Town's fourth away win of the season.

Elliott and Clive Good-

year were solid and unflustered. Young played with the mobility of a steam roller, and veteran Colin Todd could not close up the gaps like he used to.

Without injured winger John Robertson, Forest rarely looked like getting round the back of Kirk Stephens or Mal Donaghy, and for all their possession of the ball, they rarely put Jake Findlay in serious trouble.

Brian Horton and Wayne Turner gave support and cover when danger threatened, and with Hill leading counter-attacks Forest might have been humiliated instead of just beaten.

HIT POST

Forest looked good for the first ten minutes, with Steve Hodge and Kenny Swain both sending in shots straight at Findlay and Turner blocking another Hodge effort on the line after a far-post cross had caused a little confusion in the Town rear-guard.

That sort of danger rarely came up again, and Forest began to get frantic after Hill scored from the Town's first real attack. Young collected a loose ball in midfield, and as his colleagues went forward to await the expected pass Hill tackled, won possession, and raced away before placing a low shot wide of Steve Sutton.

Forest had to open up,

BEATEN only once in away games this year, the Town are still in 18th place in the First Division but edging further away from the relegation places. Brighton and Norwich were involved in the FA Cup on Saturday, and Birmingham had a day off before beating Arsenal 2-1 on Tuesday night.

Today's positions at the foot of the table:

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Sunderland	30	10	9	11	36	44	39
Arsenal	29	10	8	11	35	36	38
Man City	32	10	8	14	40	54	38
Luton	29	8	10	11	48	57	34
Swansea	31	8	7	16	40	47	31
Birmingham	29	6	12	11	26	40	30
Norwich	29	8	6	15	31	48	30
Brighton	30	7	7	16	28	56	28

and they tried. Birtles nearly got through before being stopped by a superb tackle by Elliott, then put a good chance wide from close range from a near-post low cross from the Town's right.

Steve White and Paul Walsh created space for Horton to hit back for the Town, but his 25-yard thunderbolt hit the outside of the post with Sutton beaten. At the other end Turner made another vital intervention on the line to keep out a shot by Colin Walsh.

The goal-line covering was a symbol of how well the Town's defence was organised.

The game was interrupted for three minutes in the second half when frustration or anger on the terraces resulted in a coin being hurled at Findlay.

He was dazed, but the crowd pointed out the cul-

prit and he was frog-marched out too quickly to see Findlay recover and make his only serious save of the match, diving to his left to keep out a header by Wallace.

Right back Viv Anderson tried to give Forest more width, and from two of his crosses Bowyer and Wallace headed over the bar.

But the need to drive forward left Forest wide open to counter-attacks, and some produced by the Town were quite superb in everything except the final shot.

WASTED

Moss wasted the best: he led a Town break from midfield with two men in support waiting for a pass, and only one Forest player opposing the Town's three. Moss's pass went to the Forest man.

Moss put a reasonable chance wide after Hill had left Young wondering what day it was, and three other clear openings were wasted in the last 15 minutes.

Forest and their fans seemed to know by then that they could batter away all day at the Town's goal and get nothing. In contrast, Sutton was exposed as White and Paul Walsh both bore down on him. But Walsh, after beating Todd with his controlled dribble, was foiled by the keeper's legs, and White slammed a shot over the bar.

On the day, Forest were lucky that their seventh consecutive match without a victory was not a bigger disaster than it was.



● FOILED: Goalkeeper Steve Sutton uses his legs to save from Paul Walsh.