

Canaries look on song for a place in final

LUTON TOWN 1, NORWICH CITY 3
AN UNLIKELY miracle is needed if the Town's youngsters are to reach the final of the FA Youth Cup. A very professional Norwich City side, unbeaten in their league this season, hardly looks likely to give up the advantage their power play gave them at Kenilworth Road on Tuesday in the first leg of the semi-final.

They hit the Town with two early goals, but had a little luck in the second half when flashes of the form they can produce gave the Luton youngsters a couple of half-chances to add to a gift goal that put them back in the game.

Norwich's third, in a breakaway as the Town pushed forward, gave the visitors a slightly flattering victory margin to defend at Carrow Road two weeks tonight.

Norwich's powerful and often physical approach gave them the upper hand, and for a young side they showed tremendous professionalism. It was not pretty, but it was effective.

Sadly, their coaches apparently have time to spare to organise defences to operate an offside trap with near-military precision. Football in general, and at youth level in particular, deserves a more enlightened approach from men who set examples.

For 80 minutes the Town looked a match for the very fit visitors. The problem was that the defence took ten minutes to settle down and paid the penalty for slack marking as Norwich helped themselves to two early goals.

A neat flick over Stacey North's head sent Jon Rigby in for the first, in the sixth minute, and four minutes later the marking was slipshod when Paul Clayton added a second.

HUMAN FALLIBILITY

Just to show that well-drilled defenders are still human beings, Norwich centre-half Brendan McIntyre, who has plenty of reserve team experience, embarked on a strange solo run in his penalty area three minutes into the second half. He finally pushed a weak pass back towards his own goal, and Cahill McConville nipped in to reduce the deficit.

For a time Norwich looked as though they might crack. The pace became hectic, and Gary Parker at last got his game going down the Town's right side of midfield. Norwich packed their goal, escaped with a few alarms, then hit back to score a goal that could be decisive.

McConville lost the ball in his own half. Louie Donowa, super-sharp on the Norwich right wing, delivered a perfect centre and Rigby deliberately headed his second goal wide of Mark North.

Referee John Bray of Leicester had problems as both sides battled for every ball, and sometimes for every leg as well.

Defensively, Norwich showed they could soak up pressure and use up time. Their covering was first class, and as Watford and Manchester United have already discovered this season the Canaries have one of the best youth sides they have ever produced at Carrow Road. If their coaches will let them play a bit, the second leg should be good entertainment between two sides looking for more goals.

MATCH DETAILS

LUTON TOWN: M. North; Breacker, Thomas, S. North, Potts (M. Stein, 75 mins); Parker, Shearer, Daniel; Cadette, McConville, Watts.
NORWICH: Williams; Gendbold, McIntyre, Crowe, Spearing; Goss, Danowa (O'Connor, 89 mins); Metcalf, Riley; Rigby, Clayton.

THE GOALS: Rigby for Norwich, 6 mins; Clayton for Norwich, 10 mins; McConville for the Town, 48 mins; Rigby for Norwich, 70 mins.
REFEREE: J. Bray, Leicester.
ATTENDANCE: 2,270.

ENTERTAINMENT: Rousing cup-tie after the Town recovered from the shock of two early reverses.
SECOND LEG: Carrow Road, Norwich, April 7, 7.30.



● **TOO LITTLE, TOO LATE:** David Moss scores the 88th-minute consolation goal at Highbury.

ARSENAL VICTORY IS GIFT-WRAPPED

WITH ARSENAL fighting for their self-respect and Luton Town apparently bent on self-destruction for 45 minutes, the Hatters' first trip to Highbury for nearly nine years was little short of disastrous.

In boxing terms it should have been stopped at half-time—Arsenal were so far ahead they couldn't be caught, and there was serious danger that Luton's First Division health could suffer permanent damage.

The humiliation, thankfully, was less marked in the second half. Manager David Pleat, looking for the positive things on a day when that needed a vivid imagination, claimed that his side played a lot better after the break.

They did — and at least they looked for that half as though they had a right to be in the same league as Arsenal. But I had the feeling that it was not just a case of the Town picking themselves up — Arsenal knew they had won the game already, and were content to ease their way through from half-time onwards.

Hardest of all for the Town's followers to take in was the amazing difference between two consecutive performances. At Nottingham the same side had been superb in defence, hard-working in midfield, and always threatening on the counter-attack.

At Highbury we saw the exact opposite. For 17 minutes the same tactics looked as though they could succeed again, but once Mal Donaghy's attempt to hook a long back-pass to Jake Findlay had laid on the opening goal for Tony Woodcock

REPORT BY BRIAN SWAIN PICTURES: MARK RICHARDS

there was only one team in it.

Woodcock went on to score a hat-trick, and it wasn't just false modesty later when he said that Luton made it easy for him.

Findlay had to make a succession of good saves as Arsenal, smarting from a midweek defeat at Birmingham, responded to harsh pre-match warnings from manager Terry Neill. They were sharp, eager for the ball, and always looking for ways to attack. And too many of the Town side stood and watched for too long.

The midfield was overrun, the defence stretched on both flanks and the attack non-existent.

Findlay was probably the only man who could feel anywhere near satisfied

with his efforts in the first 45 minutes. After the break Ricky Hill began to show his talents, but there was still little response from the rest of the side.

You could only think it was "one of those days" and that Sunderland must now be made to suffer from the sort of backlash the Town faced at Highbury.

It is at least unlikely that so many Town players can have an off-day together again, and the defensive tackling must surely be a lot better than it was at Highbury.

After his 17-minute gift, Woodcock scored his second seven minutes later, with an accurate shot after a sweeping move which went from midfield to penalty area via wings through Alan Sunderland,

Match Details

ARSENAL 4 LUTON TOWN 1

Half-time: 3-0

TOWN: Findlay; Stephens, Elliott, Goodyear, Donaghy, Hill, Horton, Turner, Moss; Walsh, White, Sub: Dan —spared from having a miserable debut, although a one of half a dozen players might have been pulled out.

ARSENAL: Jennings; O'Leary (Meade 74 mins), Robson, Whyte, Sansom; Nicholas, Davis, Talbot, Rix; Sunderland, Woodcock.

THE GOALS: Tony Woodcock hat-trick, courtesy of po defensive covering in 17th, 24th and 79th minutes; Paul Davis for Arsenal 42 minutes; David Moss for Luton Town, 88 minutes.

OTHER GOAL ATTEMPTS: Arsenal 14 saved, eight on target; Town five saved, seven wide. Corners: 14-4 Arsenal.

REFEREE: Clive Thomas, Mid-Glamorgan—had an evening with never a hint of trouble from either side.

ATTENDANCE: 23,987—Highbury's highest league game since January 1, thanks to a good following from Luton.

ENTERTAINMENT: Arsenal's superiority was too complete for Town fans to enjoy the occasion.

UNLUCKY BREAK: Jake Findlay fractured a thumb and looks like missing the rest of the season. See Sports News 4.

and Brian Talbot.

Three minutes before the interval defenders stood around and left it to each other as Woodcock made the opening for Paul Davis to make Arsenal secure at 3-0.

The rest was anti-climax, with Arsenal content to let the Town see more of the ball in the second half. The Gunners wasted a few chances, accepted another when Woodcock had time and space to complete his hat-trick in the 79th minute, and had no worries at all when David Moss shot the Town's consolation goal in the 88th minute from a through-pass by Kirk Stephens.

The final action was another finger-tip save by Findlay from a shot by Graham Rix, and only later did we discover that the goalkeeper's heroics

had been painful for the last hour or so — he had broken his thumb in collision with Davis.

Pat Jennings, by contrast, had an easy afternoon. He almost missed the first 25 seconds of the second half, and Clive Thomas had to halt the game and re-start it when he saw the goalkeeper run out of the tunnel after Arsenal had kicked off.

The Irish goalkeeper was rarely hurried apart from that, Paul Walsh should have scored with a header which he put wide after Arsenal's second goal, and Jennings blocked two second-half attempts by Steve White and tipped over a stinging drive by Wayne Turner.

Otherwise, Jennings was almost as much a spectator as the disappointed Town followers were.

CRUCIAL VISITS

DESPITE the defeat at Highbury, the Town have First Division survival well within their own control as the season enters its last quarter.

They are 18th, and all the teams below them, except Brighton, still have to come to Kenilworth Road.

None of the bottom six won at the weekend, and Manchester City, without a win in eight matches since John Bond left them, are only four points above the Town, having played three games more.

BATTLE FOR SURVIVAL

Man City	33	10	8	15	41	58	38
Luton Tn	30	8	10	12	49	61	34
Swansea	32	8	8	16	41	48	32
Norwich	30	8	7	15	33	50	31
Birmingham	31	6	12	13	27	44	30
Brighton	32	7	9	16	31	59	30

● Not including Norwich v Coventry last night.

Watford did the Town a favour on Tuesday night with a 2-1 home win over Birmingham. Brighton stayed bottom, on goal difference after Tuesday's 2-2 draw with league leaders Liverpool.

● **SATURDAY'S** important fixtures for the strugglers: Birmingham v Notts County; Brighton v Aston Villa; Luton v Sunderland; Man City v Ipswich; Norwich v West Ham; Swansea v West Brom.



● **NEARLY:** Mark Watts has a shot blocked by the goalkeeper during the FA Youth Cup semi-final on Tuesday.