

TOOTHLESS WOLVES TAKE A MAULING

JUST over a year ago the Town's best First Division victory of the season saw Brighton thrashed 5-0 at Kenilworth Road. The south coast club were relegated a few months later.

To set this week's 4-0 hammering of Wolves into perspective, the Wolves without bite are destined for the same fate unless something very drastic happens at Molineux.

If anything they were even worse than Brighton, with a defence that didn't want to tackle, a midfield with no heart and a forward line that hardly saw the ball.

And because of that manager David Pleat was not as pleased with the result as he might have been. He complained that the Town should have had a lot more goals, particularly in the last 20 minutes when Wolves were thoroughly demoralised.

Wolves' boss Graham Hawkins was grateful to go home without a six or seven-goal hammering, and left to clutch at very flimsy straws of consolation.

His newly-promoted team

83/84

**Report by Brian Swain
Pictures: Mark Richards**

is still looking for its first victory of the season. He hopes that they will take heart from the Town's experience last term.

"A year ago Luton were struggling to hold on. But they learned a lot, and so must we," he said.

His problem is that learning is not enough if you don't have the skill quality of a Paul Walsh or a Brian Stein in attack, the resolute leadership of a Brian Horton, and the ever-improving defensive qualities of the Town's current back four.

I felt the Town manager was unkind to his own team. The visitors were so awful that it must have been difficult to raise the extra yard to strain for more goals.

Wolves never looked like posing a real threat to Les Sealey until the points were decided, and however bad the opposition, a four-goal margin is emphatic enough.

Perhaps Walsh and Stein were given too much space, but what a treat it was to see them both back to something like their best form. England



● **THROUGH THE GAP: David Moss steers his shot into the net for the Town's third goal.**

under-21 boss Dave Sexton certainly enjoyed it.

David Moss revelled in the room he was given to prove that he is still a superb provider of crosses and a clinical taker of goals against defenders who don't fancy tackling.

The midfield strolled through proceedings, and will rarely have it so easy. Yet the success there was so self-effacing that the contributions of Horton, Ricky Hill and Frank Bunn were in danger of being forgotten.

I would have liked to see Hill and Bunn getting further forward for shots at goal, yet the tight covering in the centre of the pitch probably did more to upset Wolves than anything else.

And tighter defensive work is the extra bonus the Town need throughout this season. While Walsh and Stein were making Alan Dodd and John Pender look like carthorses at the other end, Mal Donaghy and Paul Elliott looked pedigree defenders.

Kirk Stephens has recaptured his form with a vengeance, and the happiest player at Kenilworth Road this week ought to be Wayne Turner.

Last season he was the utility man, pushed and

pulled into the side with no settled position. As a left-sided midfielder he became the butt of fans who weren't satisfied with 100 per cent endeavour.

Now, as a left back reasonably sure of his place, he has shown that he has more than effort and loyalty to offer. He has taken his chance since Richard Money left and has earned the opportunity on merit. With confidence growing all the time he deserves every plaudit he is winning nowadays.

My only doubts during the game were at half-time, when the Town had out-classed Wolves and had only one goal to show for it. Very often in those circumstances a team will enjoy its luck by turning the tables in the second half.

Wolves had been given some hope by early saves by John Burridge from Walsh and Bunn, but Walsh conjured up the first goal while the Town were down to ten men for a seven-minute spell.

Donaghy was having a head wound stitched in the dressing room as Walsh took on the Wolves defence and got in a shot which Pender headed round the post. Moss dropped the corner to the

near post and with Hill's dummy run drawing the defence Walsh headed a simple goal.

Stein finished the game as a contest six minutes into the second half with a superb 30-yard run. Defenders watched and waited as he took the ball from left to right across the edge of the penalty area before cutting a right-footed shot back into the corner of the net past Burridge's right hand.

Moss helped himself to a solo goal after being sent down the right by Horton's long ball, with Geoff Palmer left confused and helpless by Moss's control before the ball hit the net.

Horton rapped in the fourth with a shot from outside the area a few minutes after Elliott's only mistake of the match had given Gray an opening. Sealey denied Gray with a lovely save, fingertipping the ball over the bar.

Mr Hawkins went home after telling us that he didn't feel too disgraced at being beaten by one of the better teams in the First Division. He may well be right, and I'll believe it even more if Brian Clough has cause to tell us the same in Nottingham on Saturday.

Match Details

LUTON TOWN 4 WOLVES 0

Half-time: 1-0

TOWN: Sealey; Stephens, Elliott, Donaghy, Turner; Hill, Horton, Bunn; Walsh, Stein, Moss.

WOLVES: Burridge; Humphrey, Pender, Dodd, Palmer (Hibbitt, 66 mins.); Rudge, Cartwright, Towner; Livingstone, Gray, Eves.

THE GOALS: Paul Walsh header, 23 mins.; Brian Stein, solo run and shot, 51 mins.; David Moss run and shot, 63 mins.; Brian Horton, 20-yard drive, 77 mins.

OTHER STRIKES AT GOAL: Town ten saved and ten wide; Wolves six blocked and seven off target. Corners: 12-3 to the Town.

ATTENDANCE: 10,975—only Notts County had a lower First Division gate on Saturday . . . perhaps they should move to Milton Keynes.

ENTERTAINMENT: Great stuff for Town fans, but Wolves really were made to look awful.

REFEREE: David Letts, Basingstoke. Spoiled a good performance by tetchy bookings of Brian Horton and Andy Gray. It was a sporting game throughout.