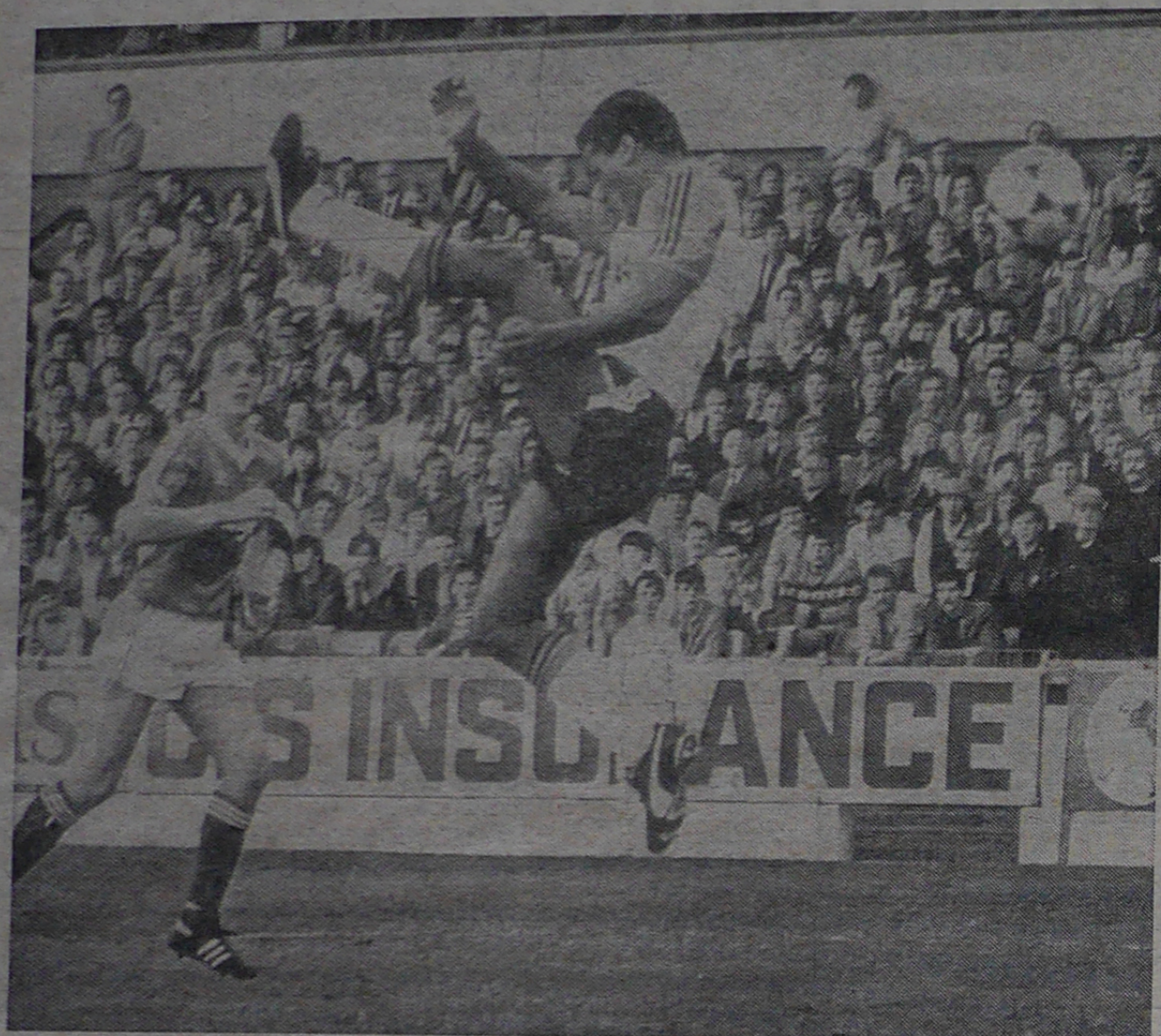


SPORT AND MOTORING



● TRYING HARD: Brian Stein gets airborne to deliver an overhead shot at the Forest goal, with Kenny Swain unable to intervene.

Villa looking for revenge

UNBEATEN at home, Aston Villa come to Kenilworth Road on Saturday seeking their first away win of the season and revenge for a defeat against the Town on their last visit.

They were heading for a place in Europe when they came to Luton in April, while the Town were briefly bottom of the First Division. Trevor Aylott and David Moss, with a dramatic injury-time winner, were the Town's scorers in a 2-1 victory.

Villa achieved their ambition despite that, and last night were trying to overcome a one-goal deficit to Guinaraes of Portugal in the UEFA Cup at Villa Park.

Poor away form cost them a better league place last season, when they were

sixth in the table. They lost 14 away games in the league, won four and drew three.

This season's start has been on a par with that. They are sixth in the table with a 100 per cent home record, but their away results have been defeats at QPR and Liverpool, and a 2-2 draw at Nottingham Forest.

They ended Southampton's unbeaten record at Villa Park last week, with Peter Withe, keen to return to the England team, the marksman with the only goal of the game.

BARGAIN BUY GIVES CLOUGH RIGHT CHANGE

ADMIRER for his record of unearthing talent down in the lower leagues and in non-league football, Luton Town boss David Pleat suffered the irony of being beaten this week because another manager had done exactly the same thing.

Playing only his third full game for Nottingham Forest's first team, 21-year-old Steve Wigley had an inspired 15-minute spell on their right wing early in the second half, and it was enough to beat the Town.

Bought by Brian Clough for £2,000 from Ashton-under-Lyne, the youngster hammered over the low cross which Ian Wallace swept into the net in the 58th minute to punish a Town performance which failed for lack of sharpness in the box.

Pleat, himself a young right winger at Forest nearly 20 years ago, couldn't enjoy the irony of the situation.

"We didn't start playing until it was too late, when we were a goal down," he complained. "We didn't do ourselves justice."

The other major irony was that the Town's strikeforce of Paul Walsh and Brian Stein, publicly praised before the game by Clough, were snuffed out by the physical strength of Paul Hart and the expertise of Colin Todd.

Report by Brian Swain
Pictures: Mark Richards

Breukelen pulled off a tremendous save.

The Town could argue that they deserved an equaliser at that stage, but just as surely Forest should have had a second goal in the last minute when Wigley's cross left Birtles with only Les Sealey to beat. The header went over the bar when it looked easier to score.

Wigley's inexperience may have saved the Town from more trouble, because while he saw plenty of the ball he did not cross it as consistently as he might have done.

ROCKY

Todd is nearly 35 and Walsh, so outstanding for England under-21 a few days earlier, came off second best. He found space for a couple of headers and a shot or two from outside the box, but none troubled Hans van Breukelen too much.

Stein, another England star unable to reproduce the sparkle in a league game, was a lot closer to scoring, although he too put an early header wide, from a good cross supplied by Walsh.

SKILL

And Stein produced the best moment of football skill with 12 minutes to go, taking a through pass by Kirk Stephens on his chest and hitting a thundering half-volley towards the top corner of the net. Van

tion turned on Forest's short spell of domination down their right, and the move that brought the goal started with a mis-timed tackle by Frank Bunn which gave away a free kick.

WEAK SPOT

Clough had picked out that weak spot before the game, and the Town weren't quite sharp enough to turn that tactic to their advantage.

Some of the best Town play came when they could counter-attack, with Stephens and Donaghy both driving forward from the back.

But as the minutes ticked by the warning of manager Pleat after the home win over Wolves kept returning to mind. Beating the bad teams solves half the problems—competing with the best is the really hard thing.

FAILED

And on the evidence from the City Ground, Forest are not one of the top teams of the First Division this season. The Town were the first league opponents this season to fail to score against them.

Even the introduction of Raddy Antic for Bunn with 23 minutes to go was unable to produce the goods, and the Yugoslav's booking for a trip on Steve Hodge just about summed up the afternoon. It was one of those days.

The midfield confronta-

Town Match Verdict ★★



● SHOOTING STAR: Paul Walsh tries for goal at Nottingham, with midfielder Steve Hodge taking cover.

DEFEAT COSTS SIX PLACES

Division One highlights

the inspiration. He scored one and made one.

It completed a wretched September for Notts County. After winning their first two league games, both in August, they have lost five on the trot.

The day's crunch was at Old Trafford, where over 56,000 customers saw Manchester United beat champions Liverpool with a goal by Frank Stapleton. It was Joe Fagan's first league defeat as Liverpool manager, after

THE third defeat of the season dropped the Town six places in the First Division, down to 13th, with ten points from seven matches. It is one point more than they had at the same stage of last season, but they are one place lower.

In today's table the Town are eight points behind top place and nine points ahead of the bottom.

West Ham stayed clear at the top with a 3-0 home victory over Notts County, with Trevor Brooking, 35 in a couple of weeks,

seven games without a loss—his only other reverse this season was in the Charity Shield at Wembley . . . against United.

United moved up into second place, three points behind West Ham. Liverpool are fourth, a point adrift of United, and level with Southampton whose first defeat of the season came at Villa Park.

Down at the bottom Leicester finally won their first point of the season, in a 2-2

home draw with Stoke, who are also in trouble—they were Stoke's first goals of the month.

Leicester have one point from seven games and Wolves, thrashed 4-0 by QPR at Molineux, have two. Stoke have four, Norwich five and Notts County six.

But the strugglers can take heart from recent history—at the same stage of last season the bottom three clubs were Norwich, Birmingham and Southampton, and they all escaped the drop. Brighton, Manchester City and Swansea all looked comfortable mid-table teams at the time.