

CONTEST IS ENDED BY A SENDING-OFF

FOOTBALL in general and Luton Town in particular was the loser at Kenilworth Road when the Town's worrying slump continued. With the Milton Keynes background row affecting gates and local enthusiasm, the referee dealt the killer blow to the match as a spectacle.

Everton went home with a morale-boosting win a week before their FA Cup semi-final from a confrontation that did little credit to any of the three teams on the field.

The Town's only slight consolation was that they were a better combination than the officials. The linesmen couldn't help that: they were carrying a passenger, referee Jim Ashworth from Oakham.

He sent off Mal Donaghy seven minutes into the second half, and that turned the game. The Town might have held Everton with 11 men, but the ten left on were swept aside as football took second place to physical commitment that sometimes had malicious intent about it.

Three late goals by Everton completed a miserable week for the Town, but manager David Pleat considered his words carefully when he discussed the sending-off turning point.

Whether it was right or wrong, he said, it spoiled what had been a close contest. He added that on the day Everton deserved to win.

I thought Donaghy deserved to go, even though most referees nowadays settle for a caution for the "professional foul".

Everyone in the game shouted for action after the infamous case at Wembley when Willie Young clob-

**REPORT BY BRIAN SWAIN
PICTURES: MARK RICHARDS**

bered Paul Allen in an FA Cup final to prevent the young West Ham striker scoring.

For a time that sort of offence was treated as serious foul play for which the punishment is dismissal. I wish every ref still took the same line. If we thought it was harsh on Donaghy, what would we have said if it had happened at the other end, with the Town robbed of a goal?

The chances are that if Donaghy had not committed himself to try to repair a dreadful mistake by Paul Elliott, Heath would have scored, and the way things were going the Town never looked capable of much more than another draw.

Mr Ashworth's contribution to an unsavoury afternoon revolved much more round a succession of inexplicable decisions. Some fouls were not seen. One or two were seen back to front, with players felled and being penalised.

In short Mr Ashworth had a nightmare game, lost control, and angered just

about everyone, including Everton and their followers.

There was a suspicion that Everton skipper Peter Reid and volatile winger Terry Curran had helped to get Donaghy sent off with their dramatic reactions to the foul on Heath.

The incident soured the rest of the game, and Reid and Curran, along with Derek Mountfield, were booked as clog and counter-clog became the pattern.

Brian Stein collected a caution for dissent, and Brian Horton and Kirk Stephens were both lucky that Mr Ashworth's inconsistencies allowed them to get away with tackles that smacked of retribution.

Problems for the Town had started long before Mr Ashworth's arrival. Paul Walsh went down with a knee injury a few hours before kick-off, and 18-year-old Mark Stein came in for his debut.

The lad had no chance

against an uncompromising defence, and deserved a happier occasion for his debut. His selection ahead of Emeka Nwajobi was a little puzzling.

Elliott returned after suspension in place of Clive Goodyear, Raddy Antic was dropped to let Frank Bunn return, and Trevor Aylott was recalled in place of David Moss.

The much-changed side looked reasonable in defence but poor in attack, with the midfield unable to be very positive going forward.

It was dreary deadlock for the first half, with the only close call just before the interval when Les Sealey beat out a header by Mountfield following a corner.

Things looked more promising early in the second half. For five minutes or so the Town took the game to Everton.

Mark Stein made a speedy break down the left wing, tricked his way past Gary Stevens, and delivered a far post cross which

Neville Southall was happy to paw away to safety via the crossbar, with Tim Breacker putting him under pressure.

Aylott forced Southall into a diving save, and the Town were close to gaining control when Elliott's blunder disrupted proceedings.

Robbed of their best defender, the Town took off Mark Stein three minutes later and sent on Clive Goodyear.

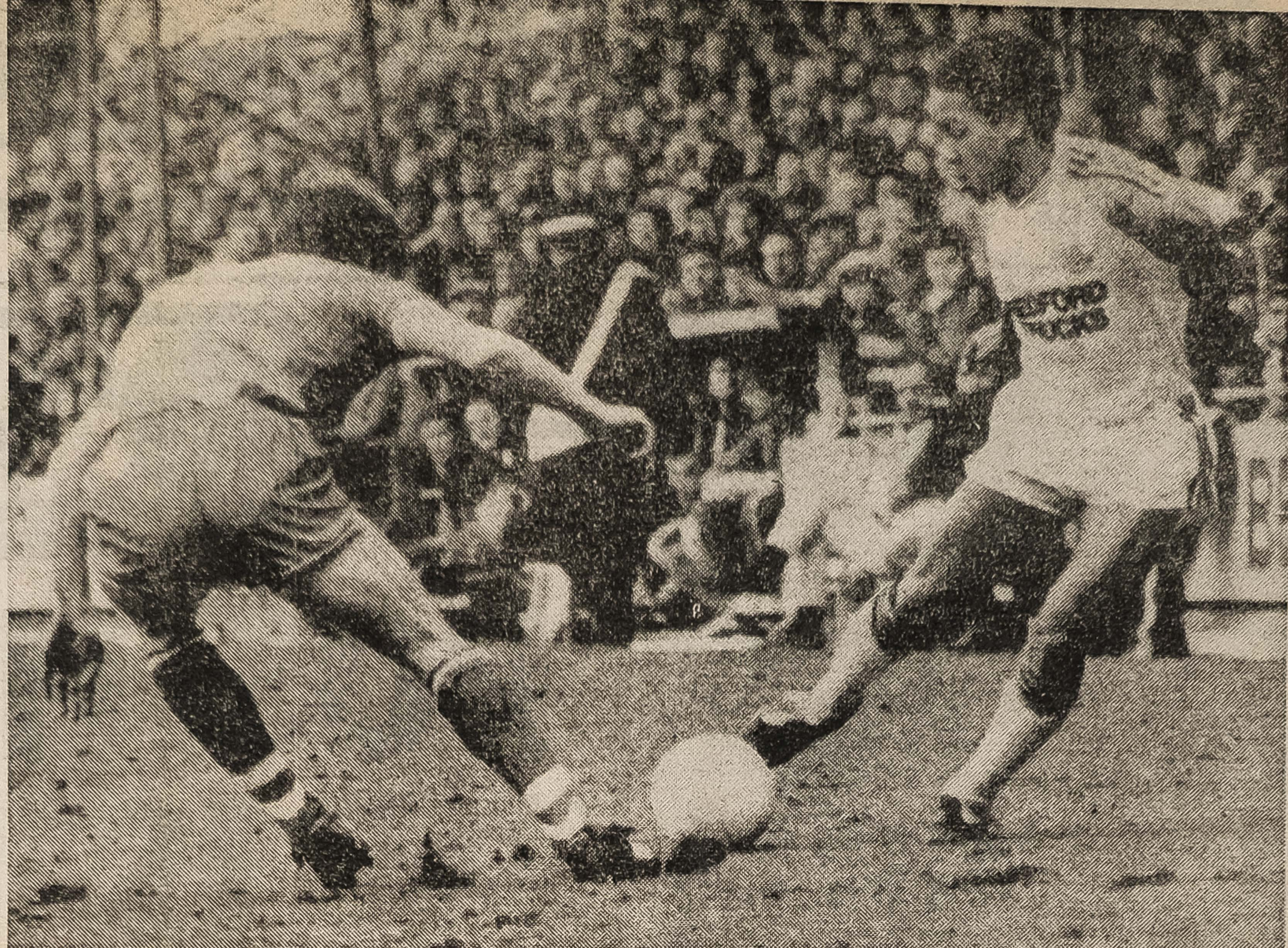
The two-man attack of Brian Stein and Aylott was swamped, and Everton pushed forward remorselessly.

Curran, fighting for an FA Cup place after seven months on the injured list, showed a little of the flair he used to save up for Town matches.

Boots and bodies flew in all directions as the match deteriorated, but Everton's pressure brought them three goals in the last 27 minutes.

Curran and Trevor Steven made the opening for Mountfield to shoot the first, Goodyear and Sealey got all mixed up to give Heath the second, and two minutes from time one of several crude challenges by Stephens floored Reid in the penalty box and Heath scored his second from the spot.

The smallest Saturday attendance of the season took cynical pleasure in having nothing better to cheer than the rising level of violence. Some even stayed until the end to give Mr Ashworth a rowdy farewell.



● **STEIN MARK TWO:** The Town's newest debut teenager, younger brother of Brian, in action at the start of a run which nearly brought the Town a goal early in the second half—full-back Gary Stevens was beaten by the body swerve and Mark Stein's cross was saved with the aid of the crossbar.

Match Details

LUTON TOWN 0 EVERTON 3

Half-time: 0-0

83/84

TOWN: Sealey; Stephens, Elliott, Donaghy, Thomas; Breacker, Horton, Bunn; Brian Stein, Mark Stein, (Goodyear, 55 mins), Aylott.

EVERTON: Southall; Stevens, Mountfield, Harper, Bailey; Reid, Steven, Richardson; Curran, Heath, Sharp. Sub: Irvine, not needed.

THE GOALS: All after Mal Donaghy was sent off—Mountfield, 63 mins, Heath 77 mins and penalty 88 mins.

OTHER ATTEMPTS: Town two saved and four wide; Everton five saved, six wide. Corners: 5-0 to Everton.

REFEREE: Jim Ashworth, of Oakham—had an absolute stinker, with both sides unhappy at some puzzling decisions.

ATTENDANCE: 9,224, lowest Saturday gate of the season, and perhaps not entirely due to recent results.

ENTERTAINMENT: Quite awful, with a promising improvement early in the second half ended by the sending-off of Mal Donaghy, and violence from both sides not dealt with by the ref.

CONTROVERSY: Donaghy's "professional foul" in the 52nd minute to chop down Adrian Heath when Paul Elliott's mistake gave him a scoring chance. If only every ref would do the same... TV cameras showed Steve Terry of Watford getting away with a similar offence at Norwich with a booking. Consistency is the requirement.

BRIGHT SPOT: Mark Stein made his debut alongside his brother as replacement for injured Paul Walsh.

BOOKINGS: Reid, Curran and Mountfield of Everton, all for fouls; Brian Stein for dissent.