

PARTY RUINED BY AN OFFSIDE GOAL

83/84

LUTON TOWN 0, STOKE CITY 1

THE HOLIDAY weekend fizzled out as quietly as the Town's home season in general at Kenilworth Road on Monday. Another attendance of under 10,000, for the third time in the last four games, gave a remarkably muted farewell to the campaign.

An early goal by a linesman gave Stoke hope of avoiding relegation with their second away win of the season as

the Town lost at home for the ninth time—a figure which only relegated Wolves match.

Incapable of producing the invention or wit to break down stubborn opposition for the 86 minutes after the goal, the Town gave their fans nothing to cheer about.

Raddy Antic, Brian Horton and Paul Walsh were probably making their final appearances at Kenilworth Road, and it was their bad luck that this season has been spoiled by background aggro between club and supporters. It ought to have been a cheerful farewell party on Monday, but Stoke's desperate need for points took priority.

THE GUILF WAS MISSING

"We didn't have the guile to get through them" was the simple and accurate summing up of manager David Pleat before Fleet Street returned to the subject they have hammered for months, the future of Paul Walsh.

His departure will be one of several changes to be made in the summer. The manager has a re-building job to do which will be almost as difficult as the one he carried through when he took charge six years ago.

My major hope is that he is allowed to have a big proportion of the Walsh income to invest in players.

Stoke grabbed their lucky win with a performance that owed more to determination and spirit than to football skill, although they deserved to win because veterans Sammy McLroy and Paul Maguire had the better of things in midfield.

Garry Parker again fought valiantly, but with Horton and Frank Bunn unable to hit the highspots the attack received fitful service.

GOAL WAS A JOKE

Mitchell Thomas, occasionally a raw defender, tried to show the attack the right idea, particularly in the first half before Mark Chamberlain started to have more effect for Stoke.

The fourth-minute decisive goal was a joke. The Town were moving out after a corner was cleared, George Berry headed the ball back towards goal, and Ian Painter, knowing he was offside, went through the motions of putting the ball into the net.

Everyone stood and waited for a flag and a whistle, but linesman Mr D. R. Elleray did nothing so referee Michael James allowed the goal to stand. And neither side really looked like getting a goal after that.

ALL THE MATCH DETAILS

LUTON TOWN: Sealey; Stephens, Donaghy, Goodyear, Thomas; Parker, Horton, Bunn (Nwajiohi, 65 mins); Stein, Walsh, Antic.

STOKE CITY: Fox; Bould, Berry, O'Callaghan, Hampton; James, McLroy, Maguire; Painter, Russell (Maskery, 77 mins), Chamberlain.

THE GOAL: Ian Painter, fourth minute slow-motion shot, well offside, but the linesman failed to flag.

OTHER STRIKES: Town seven saved and seven wide; Stoke five saved and ten off target. Corners: 5-4 to the Town.

REFEREE: Michael James, Horsham—let down by his linesman when the goal was scored.

ATTENDANCE: 9,867, and only that high because Stoke brought a fair following.

ENTERTAINMENT: Very end-of-season, as it has been in home games for much of 1984, in which the Town have won only twice at Kenilworth Road in 12 games.

The First Division

	P	W	D	L	F	A	P
Liverpool	40	22	12	6	72	31	78
Man Utd	40	20	18	7	70	38	73
QPR	41	22	7	12	66	34	73
Southampton ...	39	20	10	9	61	37	10
Nottm Forest ...	40	20	8	12	72	44	68
Arsenal	41	18	9	14	73	58	63
West Ham	40	17	9	14	59	52	60
Tottenham	41	17	9	15	63	64	60
Aston Villa	41	17	9	15	58	59	60
Everton	40	14	14	12	40	41	58
Watford	41	15	9	17	66	76	54
Leicester	41	13	12	16	65	66	51
Luton	41	14	9	18	53	63	51
Norwich	40	12	14	14	46	46	50
Ipswich	41	14	8	19	53	56	50
Sunderland	41	12	13	16	40	53	49
WBA	40	13	9	18	45	60	48
Birmingham ...	41	12	11	18	39	50	47
Coventry	41	12	11	18	55	76	47
Stoke	41	12	11	18	40	63	47
Notts County ...	40	10	10	20	49	69	40
Wolves	41	6	11	24	27	76	29