

Town Match Verdict ★★



● **GOING IN:** David Moss, out of camera range, curls a free kick into the net at Nottingham. Brian Stein, centre, contributed by lining up behind the wall, then running out to draw a defender out of position as Moss hit the space created.

FOREST STRIKERS TEACH A LESSON

EVEN Forest manager Brian Clough admitted that his team had been flattered by their victory margin against the Town in Nottingham on Sunday.

Their supporters went home happy after seeing Forest reclaim top place in the First Division, but Clough the realist was not pleased with the way victory was achieved.

He knew that the Town could easily have won the game in the first half, and that Forest had been let off by a team capable of producing quicksilver attacking moves and wasting them with powder-puff finishing.

The Town paid the price away teams are always up against: they gave Forest a bit of a run-around for almost an hour, failed to make it count, and then had little more to offer once the home side had snatched the lead.

The Forest players were detained for some time in the dressing room afterwards to be told that they were decidedly lucky to have chalked up a victory that was barely deserved.

It was a game the Town threw away. They more than matched Forest in tactics and enterprise for most of the first hour. In the first half Andy Dibble hardly had a thing to do—one simple save from a free kick, and one slightly worrying moment when a dipping volley by Johnny Mead flew wide of the post.

Goals looked a lot more likely at the other end. Ricky Hill got forward more than he had done in the last couple of games, and Wayne Turner was a revelation in a new role as the s.c.p.p.e.r and tackler in the centre of midfield.

Brian Stein should have scored in the first minute when Hill's incisive through pass put him clear. But with only the goalkeeper ahead, Stein shot wide of the far post.

Meka Nwajobi did well to get in two, clear heading chances, but wasted both. One from Paul Elliott's back-head flick on the near post from a corner hit the bar and went over and the other, from a right-wing run and cross by Stein, went straight to a grateful goalkeeper.

Hill made a good run and shot which Sutton pushed on to and over the bar, and Frank Bunn burst

THE FIRST DIVISION

	P	W	D	L	F	A	P
Nottm Forest	6	4	0	2	14	8	12
Spurs	6	3	1	2	15	7	10
Man Utd	6	2	4	0	11	3	10
Arsenal	6	3	1	2	11	9	10
Sheff Wed	6	3	1	2	11	9	10
Everton	6	3	1	2	9	10	10
West Ham	6	3	1	2	8	9	10
A Villa	6	3	1	2	11	14	10
Liverpool	6	2	3	1	11	9	9
Newcastle	6	3	0	3	10	13	9
West Brom	6	2	2	2	11	9	8
Chelsea	6	2	2	2	8	7	8
QPR	6	2	2	1	8	8	8
Sunderland	6	2	2	2	7	7	8
Ipswich	6	1	4	1	6	6	7
Leicester	6	1	3	2	9	11	6
Norwich	5	1	2	2	7	9	5
Southampton	6	1	2	3	7	10	5
Luton Town	6	1	2	3	6	11	5
Watford	6	0	4	2	6	12	4
Stoke	4	1	1	2	5	8	4
Coventry	6	1	1	4	4	9	4

Report by Brian Swain
Pictures: Mark Richards

through on his own but failed to beat Sutton.

I shared his surprise, and understood his evident disappointment, when he was pulled off when Forest got their third goal. He had been recalled to do the sort of job Brian Horton did, and he looked as though he enjoyed the role because it suited him. His passing to the flanks helped keep the Town on top for a long time.

Their pattern was to draw Forest forward, try to nick possession and then counter-attack quickly. It was cruel irony that at the end of the day the Town's efforts failed to produce goals while Forest won with the same tactics.

Having survived all that, Forest picked up the pace after the interval, goaded on by some sharp talking by Clough over the half-time tea.

It was the Town's turn to have the back four caught square on occasions. Peter Davenport's through-ball by-passed Elliott and Mal Donaghy and Dibble made a diving save to foil Steve Hodge.

Forest had lost Trevor Christie with a leg injury at half-time, and sub Gary Mills was desperate to stake claims for a place in their UEFA Cup side to meet Bruges last night.

There was a sharper edge to Forest's passing, and the speed of counter-attacking, allied to the accuracy of shooting the Town had been unable to find, produced the all-important first goal.

It started with the Town pushing men upfield for a corner. Elliott's near-post flick-on gave Nwajobi half a chance, but he shot wide from close range and a difficult angle.

The goal-kick was taken



quickly, Ian Bowyer threaded a long pass forward and with the Town's defence still well out of position Hodge raced through on his own to shoot past Dibble.

That was in the 58th minute. Five minutes later a lovely lay-back by Nwajobi gave Bunn an easy chance from about six yards. His shot was wide, and we began to realise that this was destined to be Forest's day.

They no longer needed the tactical invitation to throw men forward—their confidence rose and with the Town trying to attack another quick break

brought the second goal, with Hodge making the run and beating Donaghy with the cross and Davenport scoring after his first attempt had been blocked by Dibble.

The Town were being caught on both flanks, with all three Forest goals coming down the inside-left channel.

They lost Paul Hart through injury in the 73rd minute, forcing them to play with ten men, but he had barely disappeared before Mills had made the opening for Hodge to shoot Forest into an impregnable three-goal lead.

The late reply was an expertly taken free-kick goal by David Moss from 20 yards, and in the last minute the score was nearly made to look more in keeping with the balance of play. Moss delivered a telling cross, and Bunn met it with a shot that hit a post.

No wonder Brian Clough spent most of the game jumping up and down from the dug-out to try to fire up his players. They may enjoy reading today's league table, but they hardly deserved their proud place on top of it. The Town are down near the other end knowing that they could so easily have been winners at the City Ground.

● **CONCENTRATION:** Meka Nwajobi caused Forest plenty of problems with his skill and attacking power, and was unlucky with a first-half header which hit the bar. Here he tussles with Forest centre-half Paul Hart, with both players looking a little handy in the challenge.

Match Details

NOTT'M FOREST 3 LUTON TOWN 1
HALF-TIME: 0-0

TOWN: Dibble; Thomas, P. Elliott, Donaghy, Grimes; Hill, Turner (Parker, 73 mins), Bunn; Stein, Nwajobi, Moss.

FOREST: Sutton; Gunn, Fairclough, Hart, Swain; Wigley, Bowyer, Metgod; Davenport, Christie (Mills, 45 mins), Hodge.

THE GOALS: Hodge, 58 mins, Davenport, 71 mins, Hodge again, 73 mins, all from breaks down Forest's inside-left channel; David Moss 20-yard free kick for the Town, 81 minutes.

OTHER STRIKES: Town six saved, nine wide, one pushed onto and over the bar, two others hit the woodwork; Forest five saved and eight wide. Corners: 10-6 to the Town.

REFEREE: Ken Redfern, Whitley Bay—let down a couple of times by linesmen when the Town thought off-sides should have been given, and both teams thought he was wrong to turn down penalty appeals when shots struck hands.

ATTENDANCE: 18,605—Forest's best of the season and 2,000 higher than last season's Town visit. The Sunday experiment looks good for them.

ENTERTAINMENT: Good game to watch, but Town fans suffered agonies because all the early bright promise ended with a gloomy result.



● **UNLUCKY:** Ricky Hill blasts in a drive which was tipped on to and over the bar by Steve Sutton.