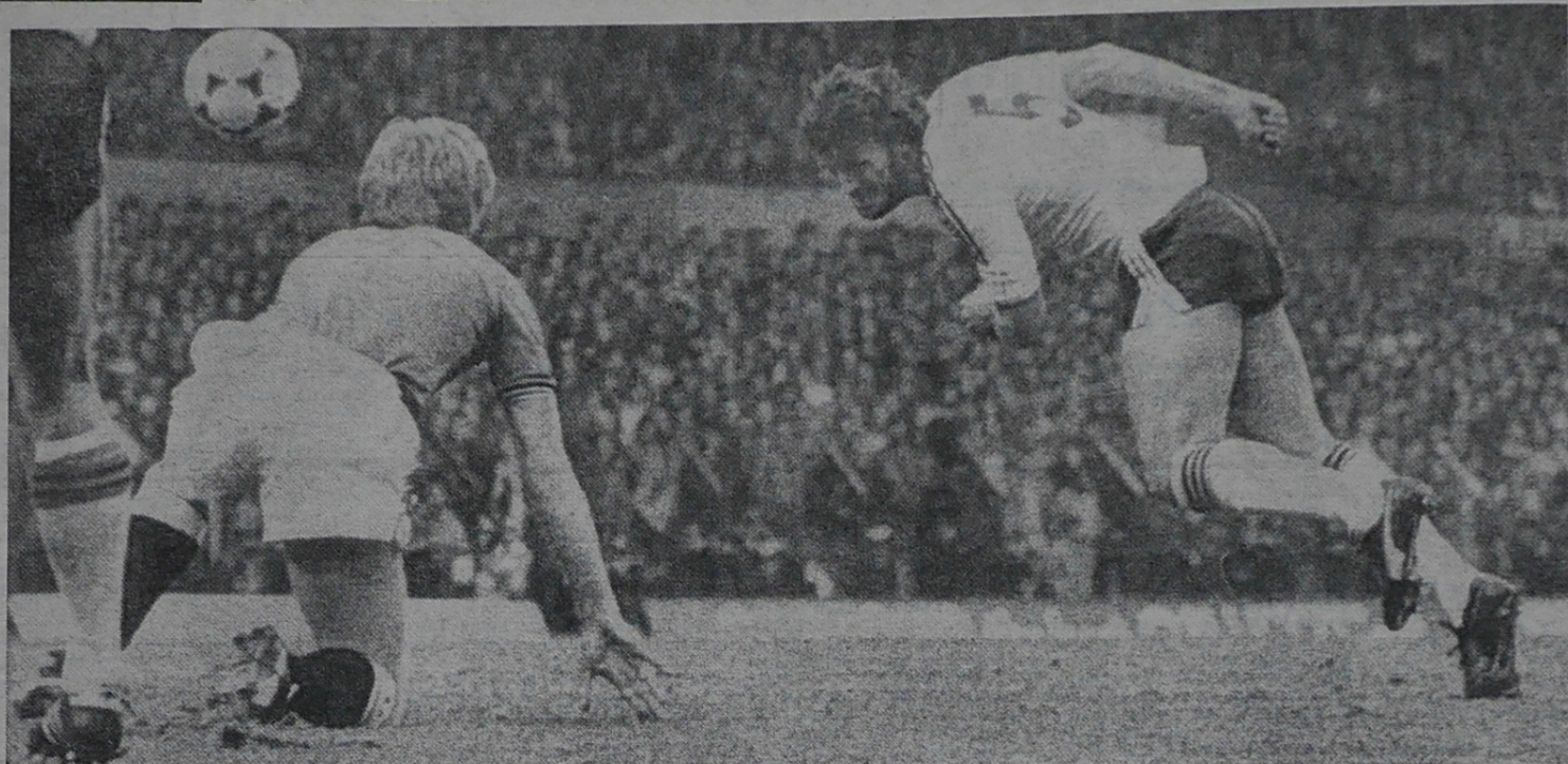




● **BIG MAN FOR A BIG JOB:** Micky Droy, on loan from Chelsea, gets into attack to power a header goalwards past Gordon McQueen at Old Trafford. Gary Bailey saved this early effort, but Droy was outstanding in beefing up the Town defence.



SPORTS EDITOR
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REPORTS FROM
OLD TRAFFORD
AND SHEFFIELD

PICTURES
by MARK
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Canon League—Division One

Match Details

MANCHESTER UNITED 2, LUTON TOWN 0
HALF-TIME: 0-0

TOWN: Dibble (replaced by Donaghy, 61 min, Parker going on as sub); Breacker, North, Droy, Donaghy; Hill, Turner, Bunn, Hilaire; Stein, Elliott.

MAN UTD: Bailey; Gidman, McQueen, Duxbury, Albiston; Moses, Robson (Stapleton, 45 min), Strachan, Olsen; Hughes, Whiteside.

THE GOALS: Norman Whiteside, twice, 56 minutes, after Mark Hughes drew and beat Dibble down the by-line and 84 minutes when the Town were stretched by Strachan's through-ball.

OTHER STRIKES: Town four saved, eight wide, one hit the bar; United four saved, nine wide, one hit the bar. Corners: 16-6 to United.

ATTENDANCE: 42,776—United's lowest of the season except for a live televised match.

REFEREE: George Courtney, Spennymoor, County Durham: Pretty good, but might have been more alert on some of Whiteside's elbow-assisted challenges.

DEBUT CHEER: Micky Droy was outstanding in his first game for the Town, but deserved his first-half booking for going through Whiteside.

ENTERTAINMENT: The Town's sparkle was not consistent enough to get a point, but their commitment and effort was a pleasure to see, and championship-chasing United were never able to relax.

MANAGER of a team that has cost a fortune and needs a long overdue league championship to make it all worthwhile, Manchester United's Ron Atkinson was relieved rather than happy after the Town's challenge failed at Old Trafford.

The loss of goalkeeper Andy Dibble with the final third of the match still to be fought could have been a crushing blow to a team one goal down.

Instead the Town's mixture of defiance and enterprise kept Mr Atkinson and United supporters on tenterhooks until the second goal was lashed past deputy 'keeper Mal Donaghy.

Mr Atkinson said he didn't think it had been much of a game for the spectators, and said his team had been below form. They were not helped by

the half-time departure of skipper Bryan Robson.

Perhaps even at money-laden Old Trafford one player's absence could be decisive. Goodness knows what poor Mr Atkinson would do if he were to lose his first choice goalkeeper and a complete back four in the space of three months.

That has been David Pleat's unhappy experience, yet if his team was makeshift, it hardly looked like it. Micky Droy came in for a quick debut after his loan signing from Chelsea, and he typified the Town's defiant approach.

He made every inch of his 6ft 4in frame count, and Norman Whiteside later testified that more than 15 stone of Droy is a formidable obstacle.

PRIDE

Droy's tackling and heading were outstanding, and only once in the 90 minutes was the big man embarrassed on the ground when Mark Hughes, the new ten-goal star of United, managed to break free for a shot that went wide.

A harder attitude, a higher level of concentrated commitment, and an obvious determination to restore a bit of pride ran through everything the Town did and that was why Mr Atkinson was forced to admit that United had not played with the freedom and flowing style he wants.

I had the feeling that the Town were determined to put more effort into defending, and there was less free running in attack.

Yet they looked the more impressive formation at the sharp end for two periods of the game, and the day's best save had to be made by Gary Bailey, to keep out a stinging late drive by substitute Garry Parker.

Tim Breacker at right-back regularly got into

THE FIRST DIVISION

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pt
Everton	15	10	2	3	32	18	32
Man Utd	15	8	5	2	29	18	29
Arsenal	15	9	2	4	30	21	29
Spurs	15	9	1	5	32	15	28
W Ham	15	7	4	4	21	20	25
Chelsea	15	6	4	5	25	16	22
Sheff W	15	6	4	5	25	18	22
So'ton	15	5	7	3	19	17	22
N Forest	15	6	3	6	24	21	21
L'pool	15	5	6	4	18	15	21
Newc'le	15	5	6	4	28	29	21
S'derland	15	5	5	5	22	19	20
Norwich	15	5	5	5	21	21	20
W Brom	15	5	4	6	23	21	19
A Villa	15	4	5	6	20	30	17
Ipswich	15	3	7	5	17	21	16
Watford	15	3	6	6	30	33	15
QPR	14	3	6	5	19	25	15
Coventry	15	4	3	8	13	23	15
Leicester	15	4	3	8	22	33	15
Luton Tn	15	3	4	8	17	31	13
Stoke	14	1	4	9	11	33	7

attacking positions, and he had a marvellous first appearance at Old Trafford. Against him Danish star Jasper Olsen was anonymous, as were one or two other big-money men.

Gordon Strachan sneaked the midfield honours, with a touch of artistry and flair which gave him the edge over the Town's greater degree of hard work and persistence.

CHANCES

The Town did not create as many attacking openings as they had done in recent games, yet they did carve out chances which could have given them the all-important first goal.

Frank Bunn, Steve Elliott, Vince Hilaire and Droy all had a go with varying lack of accuracy or power, and with the score-sheet blank at half-time there was little sign of the gap in league table status between the two teams.

Robson was concussed when he headed Donaghy as well as the ball going for goal just before half-time, and was replaced by Frank Stapleton for the second half.

As with the first half,

the Town had the better of the early minutes, and Bunn was close to a cracking goal. Ricky Hill and the hard-running Breacker created a chance, Bunn cracked a powerful drive and Bailey was much relieved to see the ball hit the top of the bar and go into the crowd.

United were getting more men forward when Whiteside headed against the Town bar a few minutes later, and the Northern Ireland international had a touch of better luck when he opened the scoring in the 56th minute.

Strachan and Albiston began a move from midfield, Hughes darted down to the by-line on the Town's left and Dibble committed himself to cutting out the cross. He failed and was stranded as Whiteside met the cross and scored with a shot through a crowded goal area.

Five minutes later came Dibble's injury, and the Town's attitude was illustrated by the fact that Donaghy had been in goal for 19 minutes before he had a serious save to make.

And a splendid save it was, dropping quickly to get his legs to a drive by Whiteside.

The Town kept United at arm's length and Bailey had to be sharp to save at Brian Stein's feet after Parker's long ball pulled the United defence one way and Droy sent it the other with a deliberate header across goal.

The killer goal came when the Town were pushing more men into attack. Moses tackled Bunn in midfield, Strachan hit a delightful through-ball into the inside-left channel, and Whiteside charged through to beat Donaghy with a rising drive.

The final goalmouth action, though, came at the other end, with Bailey making the day's best save to fingertip a 25-yarder by Parker round the post.



● **COVERED:** Vince Hilaire tries to get clear of John Gidman during one of the many spells when Manchester United were put under pressure.