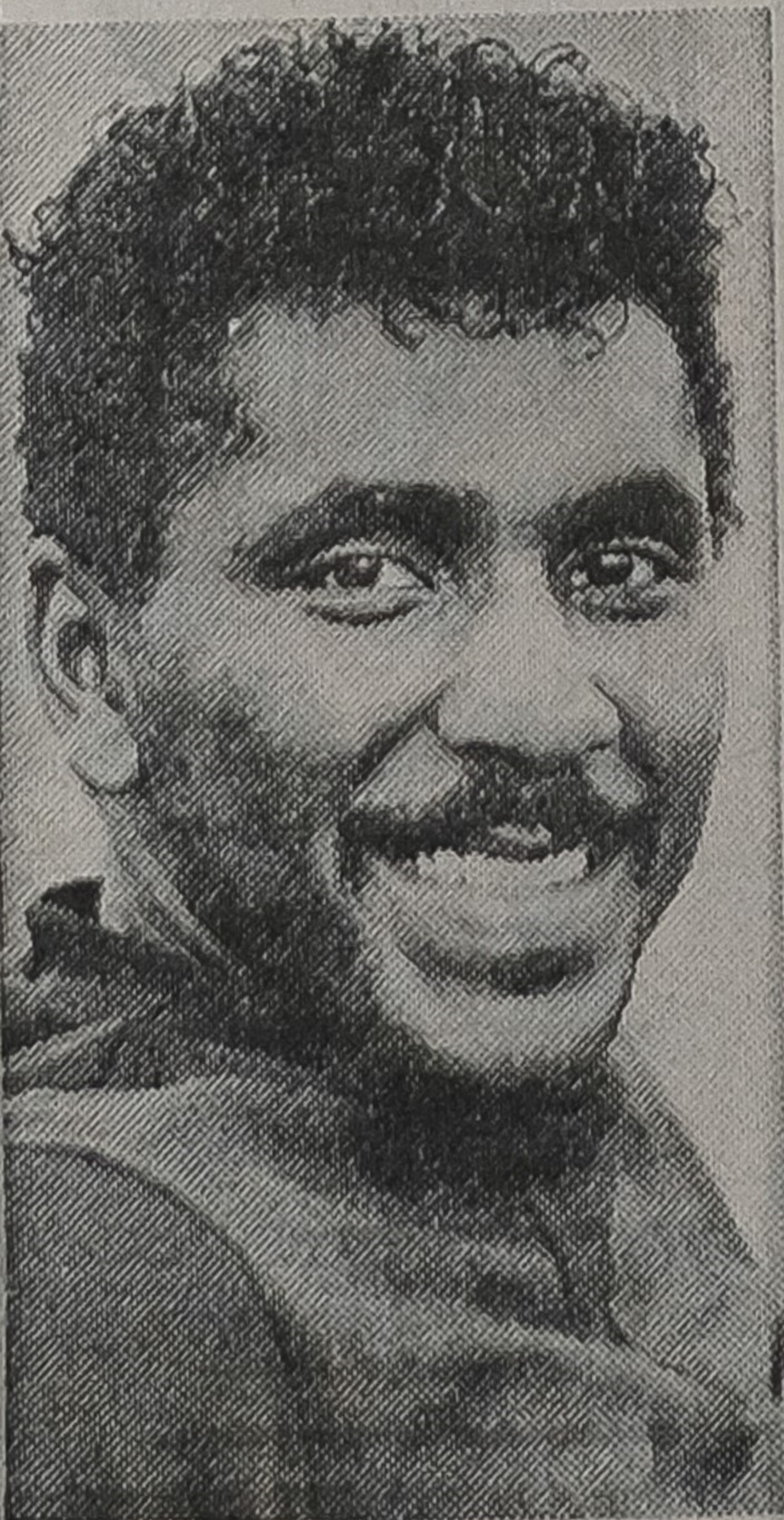


Classy Luton are top bracket now

85/86

HILL . . . superb goal

LUTON, merciless in their execution of a struggling side, must have felt like graveside muggers against a team whose relegation fate is almost sealed.

If they felt any sympathy for a club in a similar position to which Luton found themselves almost three years ago, it certainly did not show, as they nailed Albion even more firmly to the foot of the table.

The three goals did not genuinely reflect Luton's supremacy over the Midlanders, whose reconstruction under Ron Saunders has hardly repaired gaping holes in midfield and defence, or restored shattered confidence.

It might have been easy against such stricken opposition for Luton to idle their way towards the season's end. Instead, they opted to entertain their fans with some slick, penetrative soccer

Luton.....3 West Bromwich.....0: By RAY MATTS

which lifted them above Arsenal to sixth in the table.

Only the athleticism of Albion's new 21-year-old goalkeeper Stuart Naylor prevented a rout, but once Luton struck with two goals in 60 first half seconds the result was a foregone conclusion.

Even when West Bromwich threatened in a rare break-away, their luck was out, Clive Whitehead striking a post with a low drive 20 minutes from time.

Mike Newell scored first when he rose above his bemused marker to head into the top corner of the net after Ricky Hill had nodded David Preece's free-kick into his path.

Then, inevitably, centre-

forward Mick Harford got in on the act, powering home a penalty for his 20th goal of the season after Martin Dickinson had handled.

It was the second setback in consecutive games for Albion's midfielder, who had been sent off on Saturday.

Luton continued to threaten and centre-half Steve Foster hit the underside of Albion's bar, before Hill completed the scoring in the 51st minute with a superb goal.

He breasted a cross from Tim Breacker on to his boot and in one smooth movement lashed the ball into the net.

Manager Pleat must have been delighted with the efficiency of his midfield and the variety of attacking movements which bemused Albion's ineffective defence.