

BOSS GETS A RED HOT WELCOME

SUPPORTERS GAVE former manager David Pleat a bit of a luke warm reception on his return to Luton Town — and his old team made it a red hot one for Spurs.

An emotional afternoon ended with Tottenham's title challenge taking a knock as Luton's unlikely lads turned on the style to make Liverpool and Everton start looking over their shoulders.

It was one of the Town's best performances of the season, on a par with the two that destroyed Liverpool twice.

86/87

MATCH DETAILS

LUTON TOWN 3 SPURS 1 HALF-TIME: 1-0

LUTON TOWN: Sealey; Breacker, North, Donaghy, Grimes; Hill, Nicholas, McDonough; Brian Stein, Newell, Harford. Sub: Mark Stein, not needed.

TOTTENHAM: Clemence; Stevens, Gough, Mabbutt, Thomas; Hodge (Ardiles, 57 mins), Waddle, Paul Allen, Hoddle, Claesen; Clive Allen.

THE GOALS: Mick Harford, fifth minute, crisp drive from 15 yards from Ricky Hill's square pass; Mike Newell, 54th minute, deliberate angled shot from opening made by Hill and Brian Stein; Chris Waddle for Spurs, catching the Town stretched from Glenn Hoddle's aerial pass in the 62nd minute; Darren McDonough for the Town, 86th minute, first time strike from Hill's far post cross.

OTHER STRIKES: Town ten saved and four wide; Spurs six saved and four wide. Corners: 6-3 to the Town.

REFEREE: Dave Elleray, Harrow: stood no nonsense although to home fans the booking of Richard Gough looked overdue and the one for Peter Nicholas seemed harsh. Both were for fouls, as was a caution well earned by Mick Harford. Les Sealey was also booked for trying to bring down Waddle to prevent the Spurs goal.

ATTENDANCE: 13,447 — highest for any league game at Kenilworth Road this season, and 300 better than when Spurs came last season, along with nearly 2,000 away fans.

ENTERTAINMENT: A day to remember with the Town rising to the occasion to see off their old boss. The welcome could have been more sporting from the terraces but the Town's performance could hardly have been more emphatic.

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on the synthetic pitch, the crowds' jeers seemed to play a part in the first goal.

But that does not detract from the quality of football the Town served up. Spurs were swept aside, and lucky to escape so lightly as their run of seven games without defeat ended.

Ricky Hill, trying to earn a new contract or a transfer, was outrageously brilliant, with Thomas just one of the Spurs players to be tormented.

Spurs played with a five-man midfield, asking one or two to get up quickly in support of 40-goal Clive Allen.

But the five were over-run by the Town's three, and £650,000 Steve Hodge was eventually taken off after contributing almost nothing.

Glenn Hoddle was also anonymous, although it was later announced that he had suffered a groin strain during the game.

In the first half the Spurs were close to suffering real humiliation. Mr Moore had dropped Rob Johnson, switched Ashley Grimes into defence and recalled McDonough to play on the left of midfield.

McDonough, frustrated by being on the fringe of things for so long, grabbed his chance dramatically.

The Town's back four was almost able to take it easy as Spurs were denied possession and forced to defend.

Les Sealey hardly had a save

to make as the Town attacked Ray Clemence's goal from all angles.

They used both wings with devastating effect, with Mike Newell joining Hill and McDonough on incisive runs which compensated for lack of a traditional winger.

Richard Gough hardly looked a £700,000 player as he and Garry Mabbutt tried to cover Mick Harford. The acting skipper collected an early booking for a late tackle on Gary Stevens, but then showed again that he has much more than raw power and aggression.

His fifth-minute goal which set the pattern for the rest of the game was one of classic skill and instinctive ability.

Thomas, booed every time he touched the ball, gave it away to Hill, and before any cover could get back the midfielder switched the ball to Harford, in the inside right position just inside the penalty area.

The shot, taken first time as Gary Stevens tried to challenge, was hit with waspish power low into Clemence's left hand corner.

Brian Stein and Hill got in the old groove of knowing exactly what the other would do in any situation, and the Town's slick football was unstoppable.

It looked as though the whole team was fired up together, and the positive and

confident ability made Spurs look a beaten team long before the overdue second goal arrived.

Harford put a shot fractionally wide and had another blocked by Clemence. Newell robbed Gough and set up Stein for a shot which seemed to be stopped by a Spurs hand, but no penalty was given.

Spurs' only hope was that a hail and snowstorm might see the game abandoned as the pitch markings almost disappeared for a spell.

That storm passed, but there was no end to the Spurs pain as the Town roared on.

Newell was barely a yard off making vital contact with a cross by Tim Breacker, and Harford and Newell were crowded out when they looked like capitalising on another cross by the full-back.

Having suffered from the directors' box in the first half, Mr Pleat bravely went to the dug-out for the second with the enclosure customers giving him a mixed reception.

There was a brief moment of worry for the Town when Stacey North sliced a centre

Spurs

match the skill that brought the second goal. Hill took a short clearance on the right skipped past three defenders and turned the ball inside.

Stein waited for Gough to begin an attempted challenge and slid his pass to the left, and Newell was already on his way. The left foot drive sped into the far corner with Clemence unable to compete with its pace and accuracy.

Ossie Ardiles replaced Hodge seven minutes later, and Spurs looked a better side for it. But they had only a brief hope of saving anything from a game in which they were always second best.

Hoddle's over the top pass caught the Town stretched, Chris Waddle held off long enough to avoid being offside, and was then quick enough to escape from Donaghy.

Sealey charged out of his area, fouled Waddle and handled the ball, but was still by-passed.

Referee David Elleray played the advantage, Waddle scored and Sealey was booked.

But Spurs were unable to build on the goal and the more

the deserved third goal came in the 86th minute.

Hill and Newell swapped passes on the right, Spurs were punctured by Hill's run to the bye-line, and the long cross was met first-time by McDonough for another quality goal to match the whole performance.

Mr Pleat, offered all the courtesies extended to visiting managers, went into the Press conference to admit the obvious: "Luton fully deserved to win. They scored three excellent goals, and we were only in it temporarily."

He had no complaints about the mixed welcome he had received, and wished Luton Town continued success.

"It's good for Luton to be in third place in the league — and it's good for football too."

Mr Moore, still a learner at the difficult job of handling crowded press conferences, admitted that it was "a lovely moment for Luton Town" to see Spurs beaten so handsomely.

He added that it was "just another game". I suspect I was not the only one in the ground who didn't share that view of

continued for bottom of the up by half time, with Robbie Howson scoring the first of a