

NEGATIVE BORE

MANAGER John Moore shared everyone's frustration at Kenilworth Road after one of the most boring Luton Town games of the season.

Wimbledon came to bottle up the opposition, and contributed almost nothing positive.

The pity of it for the long-suffering fans was that the Town could not find the bite to take the lead and force the Dons to play a bit of football.

Both teams looked back fondly to their previous outings, and agreed on the mystery of why they could not repeat them.

While the Town were sparkling against Spurs, Wimbledon were grabbing victory at Anfield.

Liverpool must still be wondering how Wimbledon put in two scoring efforts in only 90 minutes.

We were wondering how the Town side that looked so brilliant against Spurs could be the fall-guys for Wimbledon's smothering tactics.

Mr Moore pointed out that it was always difficult to follow one outstanding performance with another.

He gave Wimbledon credit for the way they did their job.

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"This game was harder for us than the one against Tottenham. Wimbledon gave us less time on the ball."

Dons manager Dave Bassett missed the game, to go scouting, or to have a day out at the seaside. Perhaps he knew it would not be a game worth watching.

Both sides can point to enforced changes: Wimbledon's John Fashanu was suspended, as was Ashley Grimes.

Alan "Bald Eagle" Cork was never able to worry the Town defence more than once, when Les Sealey came to the rescue to prevent a result which would have been a travesty.

That was in the 68th minute when a long corner was knocked back into the penalty area by Glyn Hodges and Cork lashed in a volley from about ten yards.

Sealey, having been a spectator for much of the earlier play, made a memorable reflex save.

The brightest spot for the Town was in the form of Richard Harvey, the Stevenage teenager who was given his second league outing as replacement for Grimes at left back. He was cool and assured throughout and his schoolboy international pedigree shone through.

His manager pointed out that international football at any level makes players cope with pressure. In Division One, Harvey's greatest asset was his ability to make time for himself on the ball, and to use it sensibly.

The rest was frustration for the Town and their fans, much of it due to Wimbledon's blatant offside tactics, allied with physical contributions.

Lawrie Sanchez and Andy Sayer deserved their bookings for fouls on Ricky Hill and Sealey, but so did Darron McDonough for a crunching challenge that hammered Kevin Gage into the pitchside advert hoardings.

Referee John Key might have taken quicker and firmer action with Sanchez, but the day's real disappointment was that the Town could not make the final pass count.

Wimbledon marked tightly, defended in depth and settled for the big boot. They were determined not to be beaten, and not at all concerned about entertaining the customers. Perhaps that is an unfortunate result of the ban on away fans — Wimbledon had no supporters to consider on the day.

As the rain lashed down the only chance of brightening a dull confrontation was a Town goal.

Peter Nicholas and Mick Harford had longish-range shots wide, and the best chance of breaking the deadlock and forcing Wimbledon to be more positive came in the 23rd minute.

Hill and Brian Stein worked their way through the middle, with Hill taking Stein's short pass and driving powerfully towards the top corner.

Beasant flew across goal to make the save of the match, and three minutes later made

VISITORS THE FANS

another vital contribution when he saved Harford's low drive with his legs. Most of the rest was a forgettable bore.

The Town plugged away without getting their flowing movements into gear and the last chance of any note was lost when Harford blazed high and wide after a rare misjudgement by visiting central defenders Mark Morris and Andy Thorn.

The loudest cheers after that were for Sealey's save from

Cork, and at the sight of substitute Mark Stein warming up with half an hour to go.

The introduction of a fresh pair of legs might have been beneficial. On the other hand, it was difficult to know who should have been taken off.

Failure to break through was no commentary on the Town's approach. It was just one of those days when things would not go right.

And if we were given little

pleasure from the afternoon, Mr Moore made the obvious point: to be sitting in third place in Division One is no mean achievement for Luton Town, particularly after the upheavals before the season started.

When the final whistle blows on May 9 we shall remember a lot of good things about this season and be grateful for the fact that we don't have to watch a Wimbledon every week.



● **REINFORCEMENT:** Darron McDonough joins the attack.