

# Shilton a cut above the rest

87/88

VETERAN GOALKEEPER Peter Shilton prevented Saturday's cup warm-up game against Derby from being the doddle it might have been.

The 38-year-old England star, who has played more than 800 league games, stood defiant and eventually bloody to prevent a massacre.

The Town were not at their sparkling best, but always more than good enough for a poor Derby side, which is sliding down the table while chairman Robert Maxwell's interests are under fire from the league.

They were competent in midfield, hard workers in defence, and snuffed out in attack as the Town's sweet revenge for the opening day defeat made it eight defeats on the trot for Derby.

Kingsley Black was recalled by the Town to replace transferred Micky Weir, and the 19-year-old was twice denied his first league goal by Shilton's excellence.

The teenage winger, filling in on the left side of midfield to release Ian Allinson for attacking duties, saw an early shot smothered and a second-half drive superbly saved.

## NO DANGER

The Town were never in danger of losing but everyone, including manager Ray Harford, was getting a little anxious when it took 84 minutes to make the breakthrough.

"I thought we played well in the second half," he said. "But I was relieved when the goal went in because I thought we were never going to put one past Shilton. He was brilliant, particularly a save from Ian Allinson's shot."

That stop, with Shilton diving to his left, came after the Town had been pressing forward against a packed defence in which Mark Wright was never allowed to look England class.

Tim Breacker's overlap and cross made the opening for Allinson, and from the corner Shilton was at last beaten, only for Steve McClaren to clear Steve Foster's header off the line.

Brian Stein and Danny Wilson had lashed in drives which were marginally off target, and tension was growing as Derby got close to sneaking a 0-0 draw they scarcely deserved.

The odd thing was that skipper John Gregory was able to claim later that Derby might even have nicked all three points.

"I thought it was going to be a 0-0," he said. And in a comment which shows how Derby take it for granted that Shilton will do the business, he added: "Our defence

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was not too troubled, and neither goalkeeper had much to do. And we missed a couple of chances at the other end."

To Luton ears that sounded a very biased view of the game, although Town boss Harford reminded us that Les Sealey had been forced to make a good save from Nigel Callaghan's curling free kick through a crowd of players before the winner was scored.

Derby's only other threats were when Mick Forsyth blazed well off target when the Town failed to clear a corner decisively, and when the Town were caught on the break and Phil Gee shot weakly at Sealey.

The more hectic goalmouth action was at the other end, and the second choice as save of the match was Shilton's readjustment and take-off in one instant to save Black's deflected drive from Mark Stein's crafty pass.

It was always going to need something special to beat Shilton, and for the second week running it was Danny Wilson's power and persistence that made a vital breakthrough.

With only six minutes to go he seized on a poor clearance by Wright and forced his way down the right, taking the ball almost to the by-line.

The Town had four men in support waiting for the cross, which was pulled back to McDonough and his first-time drive was a screamer.

Even so Shilton got his hand to the shot, receiving a cut in the process which had to be stitched up afterwards.

It would have been a stitch-up of a different kind if the Town had been denied the victory they deserved.

It retained eighth place in the First Division table, with 35 points from 24 matches. Of the 16 league fixtures remaining, only six are at home. As Kenny Dalglish said after Liverpool stretched their unbeaten run at Arsenal's expense the result is more important than the performance. It was for the Town.

## THE MATCH DETAILS

**LUTON TOWN:** Sealey; Breacker, Foster, Donaghy, Johnson; Wilson, McDonough, Black; Mark Stein, Brian Stein, Allinson. Subs: Harvey and Oldfield, not needed.

**DERBY CO:** Shilton; Maclaren, Wright, Blades, Forsyth; Williams, Gregory, McClaren, Callaghan; Gee, Carner. Subs: Penny and Lewis, not used.

**THE GOAL:** Darron McDonough, 84 minutes, first-time drive from Danny Wilson's pulled back pass from the right.

**OTHER STRIKES:** Town 11 saved and five wide; Derby three saved and three wide. Corners: 7-5 to Derby.

**ATTENDANCE:** 7,175.

**REFEREE:** Keith Cooper, Swindon.

**ENTERTAINMENT:** The Town were fair value for money against a side that had little more than defiant defence to offer — and goalkeeper Peter Shilton was brilliant.