

# DREAM REVIVED AT THE DOUBLE

HAVING WON A CUP-TIE they ought to have lost, Luton Town can be forgiven today for thinking this is their year for Wembley at least once.

But visiting manager Chris Nicholl was convinced that it was a case of Southampton throwing it away, as the Town came from behind to score twice in the last seven minutes.

## Tactics change works

TOWN manager Ray Harford ordered a switch of tactics at half-time to liven up the game and Southampton.

"I always knew it was going to be a tough game. It was not a pretty match — more of a battle . . . a real cup-tie," he said.

"But once we started to play it a bit more direct in the second half I always thought we would get a goal.

"We decided to get it forward into the box because Mick Harford was always going to cause them problems in the air, even if we weren't playing so much football.

"It was a day when we had to play it like a cup-tie, and we got our reward. But I was getting a bit worried until Ian Allison got the equaliser.

"And Brian Stein showed again that he is a superb finisher, probably as good as I have ever seen."

Colin Clarke had scored a fluke opener for the Saints, Ian Allinson had a little luck with an 83rd-minute equaliser, and the stadium erupted with relief as well as delight when Brian Stein completed a memorable Town revival.

"In two minutes we turned from heroes to villains," said Mr Nicholl, who spent half an hour after the game giving his players a roasting.

"He was very annoyed, and I don't blame him," said goalkeeper John Burridge. "We also know he was right."

The Town had looked nervy for a long time, and Southampton's 4-4-2 formation, drawing back into its shell to protect Burridge, went close to earning the draw they wanted.

When the Town had possession Southampton harried and covered, and waited for mistakes, then tried to use the pace of Clarke and Danny Wallace on the break.

The Town tried to take the game to the visitors, and might have settled better if they had taken the early lead they needed.

But Mark Stein shot over the bar after his anticipation and speed had put him in position to collect a lobbed pass by Allinson, and was then denied by a superb save by Burridge. Darron McDonough forced his way down the right, pulled back a perfect pass, and the rising shot looked booked for the top corner until Burridge made an instinctive save, pushing the ball onto the bar.

## SOAKED UP

That was in the 21st minute, and there was not a Town goal attempt of note for the rest of the first half as Southampton soaked up everything without too much bother.

It was stalemate in midfield, while Southampton's more direct style threatened to nick a goal or two as the Town were in danger of being sucked too far forward.

A long ball by full-back Derek Statham sent Clarke racing past Steve Foster, with Mal Donaghy getting back to make a vital saving tackle against his Northern

## Reports by Brian Swain. Pictures: Josh Levy

Ireland international teammate, and Wallace wasted another chance with a hurried shot well off target.

At half-time, with the score-sheet blank, Southampton looked capable of getting a draw against a side well below its best.

But the interval decision to switch tactics, with the Town deciding on an "up and at 'em" policy, changed the pattern, and made it a more exciting contest.

There was more urgency about the Town's play, and Brian Stein twice threatened, with shots that flew wide.

But Southampton should have snatched the lead in the 57th minute, when Clarke chased a long clearance, got past Foster and Donaghy and drew Les Sealey. But Clarke's chip hit the bar.

## Match Details

**LUTON TOWN 2  
SOUTHAMPTON 1**  
(Half-time: 0-0)

LUTON TOWN: Sealey; Breacker, Foster, Donaghy, Johnson (Grimes, 75 mins); Wilson, McDonough, Allinson; Brian Stein, Mark Stein, Harford. Other sub: Black, not needed.

SOUTHAMPTON: Burridge; Forrest, Moore, Blake, Statham; Hobson, Baker, Cockerill, Townsend; Clarke, Danny Wallace. Subs: Benali and Rod Wallace, not used.

THE GOALS: Colin Clarke for the Saints, 71st minute, with a fluke, a left wing cross which went in off the far post as Les Sealey worried about Wallace being unmarked; Ian Allinson for the Town, 83rd minute, shot through a crowd and deflected in by defender Derek Statham; Brian Stein for the Town, 85th minute, cool and clinical close-range shot after brother Mark flicked the pass through a crowded penalty area.

OTHER STRIKES: Town six saved, five wide, one deflected onto the bar, one disallowed; Southampton three saved, five wide, one hit the bar, one disallowed. Corners: 6-4 to the Town. REFEREE: Danny Vickers, Ilford. Made some puzzling decisions, and let a couple of off-the-ball incidents escape punishment.

ATTENDANCE: 10,009, with a quarter of them visitors from Southampton but no trouble in the stadium.

ENTERTAINMENT: Astonishing excitement in the last ten minutes, but most of what went on before was very poor.

The pace quickened, and Burridge made a spectacular diving save to hold a 30-yard screamer from Mick Harford.

Southampton thought they had made the breakthrough in the 66th minute when Harford and Rob Johnson misunderstood each other's intentions and Glenn Cockerill threaded a pass through for Wallace. The winger, who had a very quiet afternoon, netted, but was given offside.

Two minutes later Johnson fed Brian Stein, who also put the ball in the net, only to be denied by another offside decision.

Wallace's other major contribution was to force Sealey to fling himself against a post to stop an angled drive, a couple of minutes before the Saints took the lead, in the 71st minute.

## CAUGHT STRETCHED

The Town were caught stretched, Clarke raced away down the left wing, and Wallace was well placed on the right for the cross.

Sealey had one eye on him as Clarke crossed from near the corner flag, and to everyone's amazement the ball flew over and around the goalkeeper and bounced into the net off the far post.

It was a fluke, but it set up the most entertaining spell of the game. Manager Harford sent on Ashley Grimes in place of Johnson, and the Irish international played a crucial role in the equaliser.

With seven minutes to go he took a left-wing corner. Southampton pulled ten men back to defend, and Grimes confused them all by pulling a simple pass back to Allinson, in the inside left position near the angle of the penalty area.

He shot hard towards the far corner, Brian and Mark Stein sold dummies over the ball, and it bounced off Statham into the net.

If it was lucky, it was no more so than Clarke's goal had been. And for the first time it put the Town on top psychologically.

With five minutes left Mark Stein's flicked pass gave Brian Stein a tiny opening through a crowded penalty area, and his coolness and calm shot was a lesson in professionalism.

And that was the one quality Southampton lacked when it mattered, said their disappointed manager.

"We let the short corner to Allinson catch us out when all we needed to win was to keep our concentration.

"Our goal was maybe a little fortunate, but it had put us in a winning position, and we are all angry that we threw it away.

"We went slack and the players know they should have got a draw at the very least."