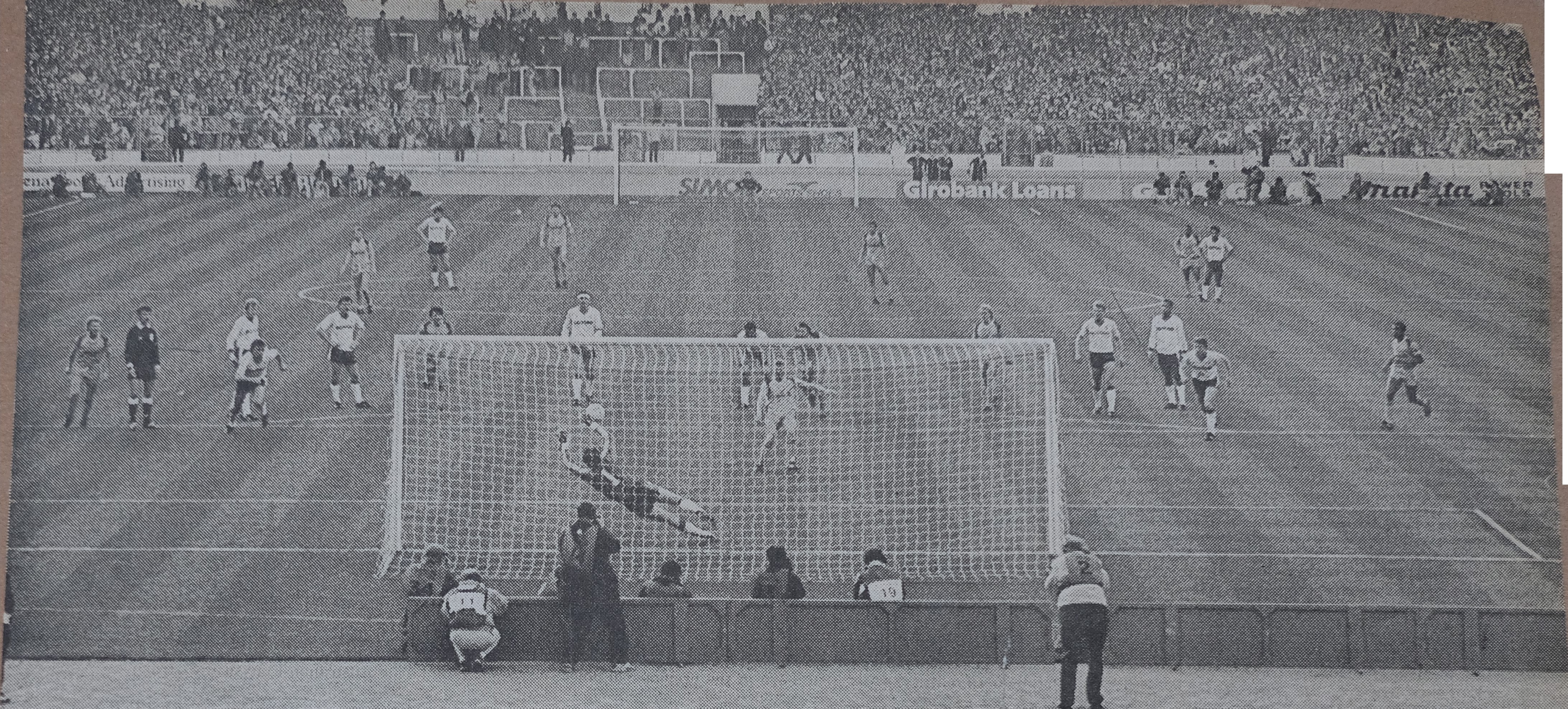




High, wide and handsome . . . Beavon, revelling in Wembley's open spaces, drives home the penalty which put Reading into the lead yesterday

PHOTOGRAPH: FRANK BARON

Simod Cup Final – Luton Town 1, Reading 4

Reading enjoy their greatest day

Don Beet at Wembley

AFTER HOLLAND and Ruud Gullit came Reading, and there was little sense of anticlimax as they celebrated their first visit to Wembley by demolishing Luton Town to become the first winners of the Simod Cup.

Luton's fans, outnumbered three to one, could only watch in disbelief as the Second Division strugglers took the First Division outfit apart in a one-sided final.

It was the speed of Michael Gilkes, normally a defender but pushed up front with Mick Tait

because Steve Moran and Billy Whitehurst were cup-tied, that left Luton undone by half-time.

Yet Luton scored first, when Ian Allinson's corner in the thirteenth minute was flicked on by Mark Stein for Mick Harford to power a diving header past Steve Francis.

Reading responded vigorously, and after 21 minutes the busy Gilkes put Reading level. Racing clear on the left from a Smillie pass, he lobbed Sealey, who got his hands to the ball but could not keep it out.

Five minutes later Tim Breacker pulled Gilkes down in the box, and Stuart Beavon scored calmly from the spot.

Luton, on their first visit to Wembley for 29 years, and relying on the skill of the two Steins and the power of Harford, came close to drawing level when Steve Foster's long-range effort was turned away by Francis. But Reading had the last word of the first half when Gilkes crossed perfectly for Tait to head against the bar.

The second half was only 12 minutes old when a determined run by Smillie left Breacker struggling again and Tait in the clear to make it 3-1.

And in the 66th minute another strong run, this time by Linden Jones, gave Smillie the goal he had deserved.

Harford continued to work hard and forced Francis to two diving saves, but by the 80th minute both Steins had been replaced, a clear acknowledgment of defeat.

Reading's manager, Ian Branfoot, was as dazed as anyone by his team's performance. "It was magnificent. I couldn't believe it. The team couldn't believe it. But the 40,000 fans from Reading certainly believed it."

Luton Town: Sealey, Breacker, Grimes, McDonough, Foster, Donaghy, Wilson, B. Stein (R. Johnson, 80min), Harford, M. Stein (K. Black, 59), Allinson.

Reading: Francis, Baillie, Richardson, Beavon, Hicks, Curle, Jones (J. Williams, 78), Taylor, Tait (G. Peters, 83), Gilkes, Smillie.

Referee: J. Martin (Alton).