

How the barefoot boy became a Wembley winner

WEMBLEY has unearthed few more thought provoking match-winners than Brian Stein, who fell in love with football as a barefooted boy kicking tin cans around the townships of Cape Town.

On a day when the attention of the sports world was concentrated upon Zola Budd, a more privileged product of South African society, he offered a glimpse of the talent suppressed by that divided nation.

"I suppose life is what you make it," he said afterwards as Luton's celebrations gathered momentum. He could be forgiven the understatement.

Stein, 30, was aged only eight when his father Isaiah, an anti-apartheid activist placed under arrest by the authorities, fled to Britain with eight of his nine children.

Despite the traumatic departure the seed of sporting enjoyment had been sown. It was cultivated subsequently in the succession of such unlikely pick-up teams as Crouch End Vampires.

Cold showers were more frequent than qualified referees at that level of park football but, for all the interest of

MICHAEL CALVIN on the South African roots of the two-goal cup final scorer

professional scouts, he refused to rush into an insecure profession.

Only when he had gained A levels in history and sociology did he accept Edgware Town's offer of the princely sum of £15 a week. He had embarked on a career which reached its high point in last evening's spring sunshine.

His sense of elation extinguished the memory of such disappointments as being substituted during his solitary England appearance in France in 1984. As he said: "This makes it all worthwhile."

It was significant that his first act after the final whistle was to rush towards his brother Mark, 22, who had walked out of the Luton squad briefly when relegated to the substitutes' bench.

He is fiercely protective towards his younger brother and played a key role in healing the rift with Ray Harford, his manager.

Brian explained: "Mark is young and headstrong. He was disappointed but he saw he was being silly and that the manager had not left him out through spite."

Stein junior is the only one of the family to have made a return journey to their former home in the Athlone township. He was startled to discover the depth of the passion for soccer which unites the coloured community.

"I don't want to sound racist but it's true that cricket and rugby are regarded as the white man's game," said Brian, who was officially registered as a Cape Coloured.

"Soccer was all we had. We played anywhere we could find and whoever had a ball was our friend. I tell you there were some great players there. The potential is just massive."

But he smiled and knew it was hardly the time for a party political broadcast. His point about sport's ability to bridge the racial divide, had been made far more eloquently during a memorable final.

Soccer has its bigots, but yesterday Stein's colour did not matter. He was, quite simply, a hero.

Dibble's future is uncertain

By Christopher Davies

ANDY DIBBLE, chosen as Man of the Match, is reluctant to sign a new contract with Luton because he does not consider himself the first-choice goalkeeper and is uncertain of his future.

Dibble has played only five senior matches this season because of the consistency of Les Sealey before his recent shoulder injury.

Despite Dibble's outstanding performance at Wembley, which included a crucial 81st-minute penalty save from Winterburn when Arsenal led 2-1, he is not confident of playing against Norwich on Saturday by which time Sealey should be fit.

Dibble said: "I had a feeling I wouldn't be playing at Wembley but Les was not 100 per cent fit. Luton have told me verbally they would like me to stay, but I want first-team football and will see what happens in the next few weeks."

Ray Harford, Luton's manager, believed the team's extra experience was the telling factor in their success, which he hopes is the springboard to a new era for Luton.

He said: "Now that we have won a major trophy perhaps more players will want to join us. Our win may also silence the critics who said we couldn't play well on grass."

Mr Harford, who acknowledged the important role of Johnson in reducing the potential danger of Rocastle, said: "When the penalty was conceded I thought we were dead and buried."

One of the happiest Luton players was Kingsley Black who rounded off a dream day with an international call-up for Northern Ireland.

Black, 19, whose father comes from Belfast, said: "I can't believe it. A few weeks ago all my thoughts were centred on Luton reserves."

George Graham, Arsenal's manager, was gracious in defeat to Mr Harford, one of his closest friends in football. He considered the critical difference between the sides was his team's inability to score a third goal while they were dominating the game.

"I am pleased for Ray," said Mr Graham. "Luton have qualified for three Wembley appearances and they have won the most important one."

He defended his policy of resting key players in the weeks leading up to the final and said: "I have to look long term and I am very satisfied with the way the club have progressed."

Steve Williams, Arsenal's mid-field player, could face disciplinary action by the club after failing to report with the official party yesterday.

Mr Graham said: "I told him on Saturday he wasn't playing and I have not heard from him since. I don't know where he is."

Stein strikes to crown thrilling final showpiece

By Colin Gibson

Arsenal 2 Luton Town 3

BRIAN STEIN added to Wembley's endless tradition of romance and high drama as Luton produced a most remarkable climax to yesterday's Littlewoods Cup final.

Only 14 seconds separated Arsenal from extra time when Stein scored to write himself into the stadium's folklore and gave Luton their first major trophy in their 98-year history.

For Ray Harford, in his first season as manager, it was a moment of pure ecstasy as Stein beat Winterburn to sweep in a splendid left-foot cross from Grimes.

A couple of feet away on the Arsenal bench George Graham, who enjoyed similar success in his first year at Highbury, was left to reflect on what might have been.

Mr Graham must have been trying to focus on a series of blurred moments 10 minutes from the end. Then Arsenal were leading 2-1, thanks to the intervention of substitute Hayes, and had the chances to make victory absolutely secure. First they watched as the ball bounced against post and bar twice—and then they wasted a penalty.

Rocastle's only meaningful run of the afternoon took him past the tiring Donaghy who brought him crashing down.

Despite the desperate pleas for clemency Joe Worrall, the Warrington referee, awarded the penalty. Winterburn was invited, in view of a history of five successive squandered kicks, to convert this one but instead he looked on in horror as Dibble in the Luton goal plunged to his left to turn the ball away.

In those few seconds a Cup was won and lost.

Luton, who had gambled on the inexperience of Black and the rustiness of Hill and Preece, found new spirit and an untapped reservoir of stamina from Dibble's magnificent save.

Caesar, who will not look back on his Wembley baptism with many fond memories, was caught in possession eight minutes from time as Luton made the score 2-2.

Wilson headed the ball home following fine work from Stein

and Black who played with a maturity and confidence that belies a League career of only two matches.

As the clock ticked away Hill, making his first appearance since breaking his leg at Everton on Boxing Day, and substitute Grimes drove Luton towards a place in history.

Afterwards Hayes was left to reflect on the fleeting nature of fame. Last season's leading scorer, Hayes was substituted in the Wembley victory over Liverpool. This year he was asked to inject the impetus that Groves had provided last April.

It was, ironically, Groves who was withdrawn this year and who watched as Hayes ripped open a Luton defence that had nobly protected Stein's 13th minute opener.

Within four minutes Hayes had reduced Luton to a shambles. Dibble, who gave an outstanding display, could do nothing as Hayes scrambled in Smith's cross in the 71st minute and was powerless again as Smith drove in Arsenal's second.

In the end, however, Arsenal were to be mere supporting players in a match which must have restored much of the battered faith in the national sport.

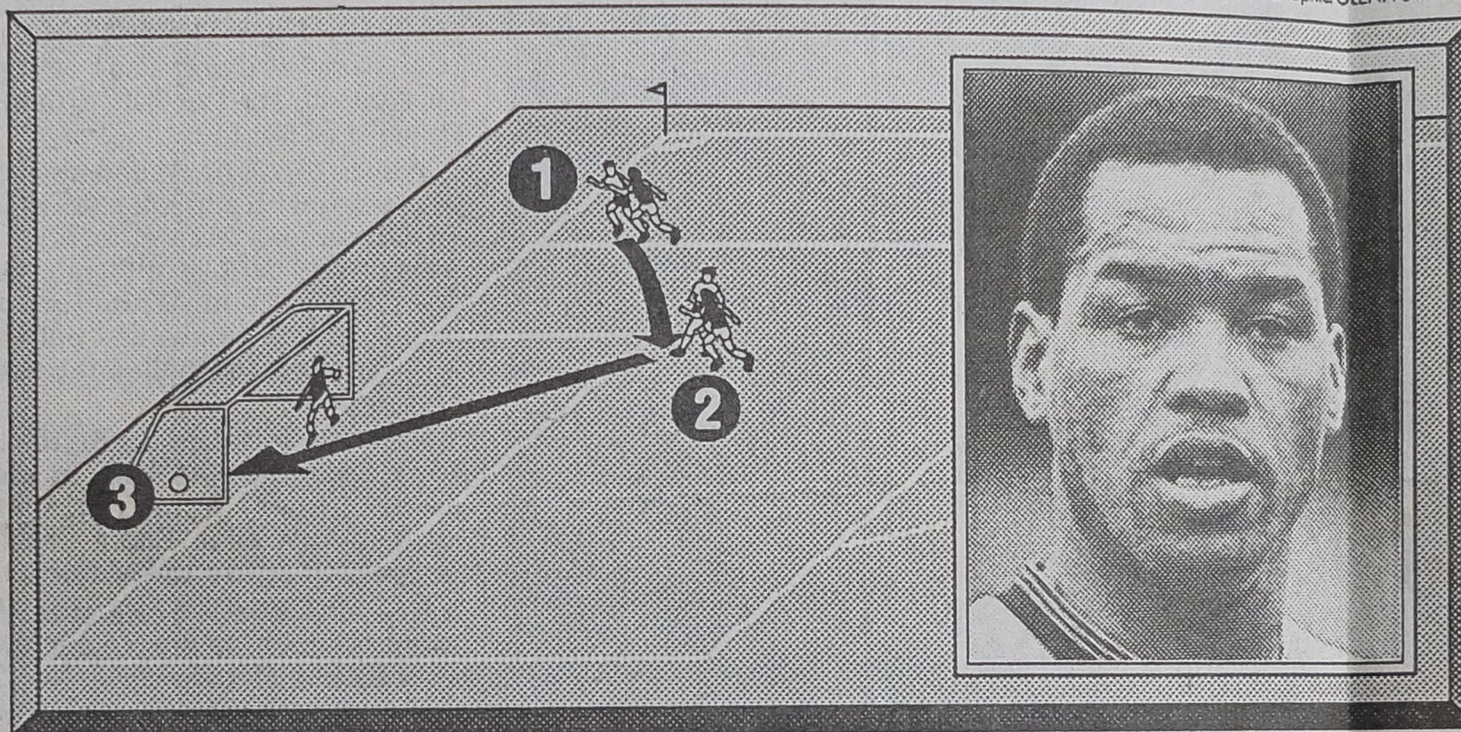
Luton left Wembley nurturing a dream of European competition while Arsenal are still searching for a route out of Liverpool's shadow.

Arsenal: Lukic; Winterburn, Sansom, Thomas, Caesar, Adams, Rocastle, Davis, Smith, Groves (Hayes 60), Richardson.

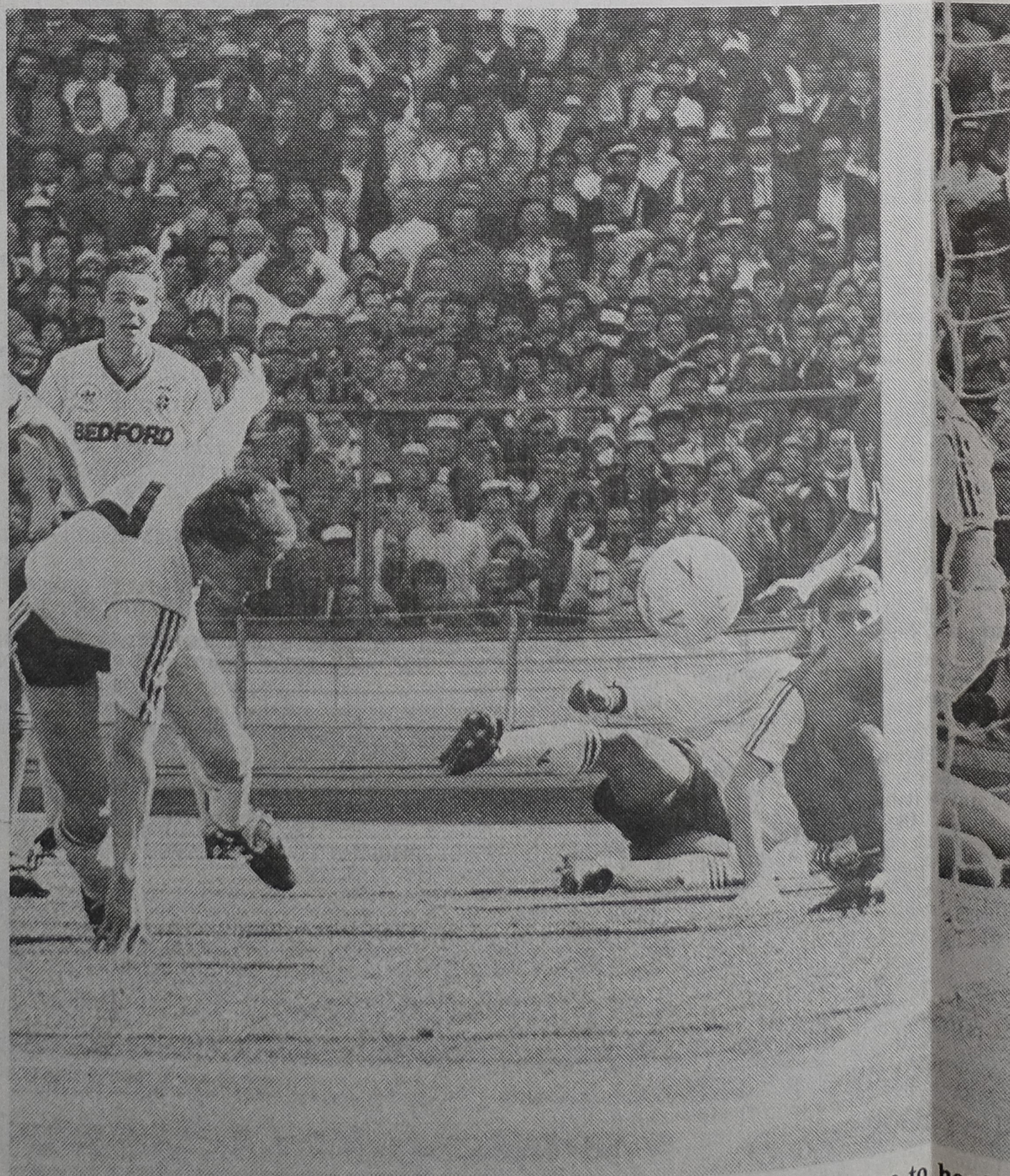
Luton Town: Dibble; Breacker, Johnson, Hill, Foster, Donaghy, Wilson, B Stein, Harford (M Stein 64), Preece (Grimes 76), Black.

● Luton are the fifth outsiders to win a Wembley final in three seasons.

● Winterburn's penalty miss made him the third player to fail to score from a penalty in a Football League Cup final at Wembley. The others were Ray Graydon (Aston Villa) versus Norwich City in 1975 and Clive Walker (Sunderland) versus Norwich in 1985.



How the cup was won... Ashley Grimes outpaces Kevin Richardson (1) and centres. Brian Stein reaches the ball ahead of Nigel Winterburn (2) and his first-time shot goes inside the far post (3). Inset... Brian Stein, the match-winner.



How the cup was saved... with eight minutes left Danny Wilson stoops to head Luton's equaliser and set the scene for their last-minute winner