

Let off the hook

THE SEEDS of success at The Dell were sewn at Highbury.

For half an hour the Town were the better footballing side, although Arsenal looked more powerful.

Lars Elstrup scored his first of the season and if the Town had stuck to the positive style which put them ahead the Gunners would probably have been shot down.

Manager Ryan was niggled at the way the Town let Arsenal take the initiative.

"We seemed to think 'Great, we've scored, so let's hold it,' and that let Arsenal back into it."

In an all-action first half the Town deserved the lead given to

Elstrup with a near post header from a cross by Preece, who had an outstanding

display in the service

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and support he got from Preece, but Kingsley Black was out of sorts on the right, and limped off at half-time with a thigh strain.

Arsenal, roared on by a big crowd, eventually deserved to win. Paul Merson got the equaliser and Michael Thomas the winner with a cracking 20-yarder.

Alec Chamberlain needed to be the Town's star man and but for him the result would have looked much worse, even though the Town's general performance was highly encouraging.

Referee Brian Hill won few friends on either side with some surprising decisions and a laid-back attitude to offences which warranted yellow cards. Both sides might have collected a cou-

ple but Mr. Hill apparently didn't want to get his pencil wet.

THE MATCH DETAILS

TOWN: Chamberlain; Breacker, Dreyer, Beaumont, James (Harvey 70 mins); Hughes, McDonough, Preece; Elstrup, Dowie, Black (Rees 11T).

GUNNERS: Seaman; Dixon, Bould, Adams, Winterburn; Rocastle, Davis, Thomas; Merson, Smith, Limpar (Groves 83). Other sub: Pates.

THE GOALS: Lars Elstrup, 12 mins; Paul Merson 36, Michael Thomas 65.

OTHER ATTEMPTS: Town three saved and four wide; Arsenal six saved and eight wide. Corners: 5-4 to Arsenal.

REFEREE: Brian Hill from Kettering, not up to his usual standard.

ATTENDANCE: 32,723 for Arsenal's first home game of the season, 4,000 higher than for the Town's last visit, in December.

ENTERTAINMENT: Cracking first 35 minutes, when the Town more than matched a collection of multi-million pound talent.