

Sports News

THREE MEN ARE MEN



● OLD AND NEW: Mitchell Thomas and Lars Elstrup in opposition.

IT'S AN OLD problem in football that if a side loses a man the remaining ten are likely to be so much more determined that they can beat the 11.

But when you find yourself facing only nine opponents, as happened to Luton Town at White Hart Lane on Saturday, you really should be capable of accepting a welcome Christmas present.

GO IT WRONG

Sadly, the Town simply did not deserve to win because they played it all wrong when they had the chance to wear down a Spurs side reduced to nine men by first-half red cards to Nayim and Pat Van Den Hauwe.

Cent Hughes became the third to be sent off, but that was after the nine men had got the winner against 11. A ten-man team had equalised.

And it has to be acknowledged that for all their spoiling and niggles Spurs showed the greater determination and effort, even if much of it was directed towards intimidating the referee. Players at putting on the pressure.

Brian Swain reports

In the circumstances David Elleray did well on a day when two many Londoners wanted to make an explosive afternoon as they sought to end a run of three games without a win.

I felt the ref's biggest mistake was to let Van Den Hauwe get away with a crude challenge on Kingsley Black in the 25th minute, when the Town were up and Spurs were showing signs of losing their confidence.

By that stage four players had already been booked and the tackle on Black deserved at least the fifth yellow card.

There seemed to be a fine dividing line between what Spurs considered to be legitimate endeavour and what others would feel was over the top. They had a habit of making exaggerated appeals for every challenge they lost, and naturally the home fans join in.

STUDDEN ASSAULT

But even the most blinkered home support knew they had seen violence of an unusual order that had to receive the red card when Van Den Hauwe used his studs as living offensive weapons to assault Iain Dowie in the 37th minute.

The lowest point of contact as the defender launched himself like a demented missile was high on the thigh. It was the worst tackle I can ever remember many years of watching soccer at all levels, and all the more appalling because it was so deliberate. The man needs a brain transplant, and a lifetime suspension is much less than natural justice demands.

And I have not forgotten a late tackle by Paul Clarke breaking Lili Fucelli's leg at Brighton 12 years ago. It is not Van Den Hauwe's fault that Dowie has not suffered the same fate.

Having had that moan, I have to confess that I did not agree with Town suggestions that Gary Linker had taken a dive to win a yellow card for Darin McDonough in the 10th minute. The defender was done for obstruction which prevented Linker making a solo burst from the half-way line.

Match details

TOTTENHAM 2 LUTON TOWN 1
Half-time: 1-1

TOWN: Chamberlain; Johnson, McDonough (Beaumont 83 mins), Dreyer, Harvey, Hughes, Williams, Preece, Black, Dowie, Elstrup (Farrell 61 mins).
SPURS: Thorpe; Thomas, Sedgley, Mabuti, Ian Howe; Nayim, Howells, Gascoigne, Walsh (Alan 67 mins), Stewart, Linaker (Samways 75 mins).
THE GOALS: Iain Dowie for the Town, 12th minute, side foot shot from cross by Kingsley Black; Paul Stewart for ten-man Spurs, 34th minute, easy header after initial run and cross by Paul Gascoigne; Stewart again for nine-man Spurs, 58th minute, scrambling near-goal effort from Gascoigne's corner.

OTHER STRIKES: Town five saved and four dismissed; Spurs four saved, seven wide and one netted but without for offside. Corners: 10-5 to Spurs.
REFEREE: David Elleray. Midfield — Was set for problems in a clash which became emotionally charged. Spurs and their big crowd don't help, trying to intimidate the ref to win decisions, and in all the usual circumstances he did well, although he could hardly stop Gary Linker on a break from midfield to assist Steve Sedgley and Iain Dowie on Richard Harvey's 15 mins: Nayim for a foul on Paul Walsh.

SENT OFF: 25 mins: Nayim for foul language; Pat Van Den Hauwe for the worst 'back' kick seen anywhere in the league — an attacking 160yd punch using his right leg of a fist; 60 mins: Cent Hughes for the last tackle on Linker, taking his ankles after the whistle had blown — he said later he hadn't heard it.
ATTENDANCE: 27,007, lowest of the season so far at White Hart Lane, but pretty good for the last Saturday before Christmas.

ENTERTAINMENT: A match which will be remembered for the wrong reasons with lines sent off and five booked. I should have been a lot better for Town than a 2-1 for the 11 men to score against nine was not a pretty experience.

Town match verdict ★ ★

ADDITIONAL LINE WINNERS

Pictures by Josh Levy

Nor did I have too many doubts about the red card for Cent Hughes. I was on the hour for a late tackle player over-reacted to get Hughes sent off. Hughes said before he made his tackle. On the day I knew his boots and ankles met that Hughes would have to go for the good of the match.

LOOKING GOOD

If he had not been sent off I doubt if any referee in the world could have coped with the likely repercussions in the last 30 minutes.

Accusations that Linker played-acted were later withdrawn, and it was good to hear Linker say afterwards that he did not think Hughes should have been sent off. Jim Ryan also made a telling point on the youngster's behalf: the tackle may have been late but it was not high.

What pained me was that for a long time the Town looked well capable of winning — and they were the better side when it was 11 against 11.

Paul Stewart had seen an early effort ruled out for offside before the Town's next passing football, usually revolving around David Preece, gave them the ascendancy.

And Spurs confidence was dealt a massive blow in the 12th minute when the Town took the lead. Hughes set Kingsley Black free on the left and he delivered the sort of cross Jim Ryan and John Faulkner had forecast could be telling. It traced hard and low across the penalty area between the back four and goalkeeper. Each left it to the other and Dowie steamed in on the blind side to side-foot a deliberate low into the net.

Tension built up on and off the pitch as Spurs and their fans realised that things were going against them. And perhaps the first red card, in the 29th minute, was the perverse boost Spurs needed. Nayim, booked earlier for a foul on Richard Harvey, was slow to retaliate when a free kick was given to the Town. His conversation with Mr Elleray included foul language according to the ref's report, and that was the end of the day's work for Nayim.

MOMENT OF MAGIC

Inevitably the ten men responded to a new challenge, and so did the crowd.

And whatever we think of the hype around Paul Gascoigne he proved that he can produce moments of brilliant magic. He did in the 34th minute with a run down the left wing which left three Town men beaten. The cross was perfection and Paul Stewart headed a simple equaliser.

'We were better against 11 men'

Manager's viewpoint

The big disappointment for him was to acknowledge that on their second half showing the Town did not deserve to win, despite their numerical superiority.

"Our form completely went. We looked better when it was 11 men against 11 and it would have been much better for us if it had stayed like that.

"We got a nice opening goal, and the first half performance was good."

The boss felt his men had failed to respond to the different problems they faced when Spurs were down to nine men.

"Tottenham conceded a lot of space in midfield and instead of getting through there quickly we

Three minutes later Van Den Hauwe was banished and all the Town had to do then was keep calm and run the game at Spurs.

Instead, the Spurs response of funnel back, concede midfield and take the pace out of the game was all too successful.

They managed to force the Town to slow it down too although the early stages of the second half gave every indication that the Town could still win.

Black burst through the inside left channel but shot over the bar and Dowie was only just short of decisive contact with an overhead kick when Marvin Johnson chipped a short pass into the box.

The danger was that Spurs could break out with pace as the Town pushed forward. They did just that in the 58th minute, with Linker chasing an apparently lost cause but winning a corner. And when Gascoigne knocked it in the defence was found wanting as Stewart scored his second at the near post.

Hughes was sent off two minutes later and for the rest of the game it was Spurs taking the steam out of things and rarely looking in danger, although Sean Farrell's introduction as a sub injected some of the extra pace and effort the Town needed.

I fear that on the day Spurs were just too professional for the Town. It hurts to admit it, but they deserved their unlikely nine-man win.



● BEST FOOT FORWARD: Sean Farrell in action.



● FLYING SKIPPER: John Dreyer tumbles in an incident where the Town hoped in vain for a penalty.

'The season so far'

THE TOWN's results, scorers, attendances and league table position:

August	9,583	Nogan (4), Brecker 8, Number of players used, 10
25 C. Palace (h) 1-1 (Dowie)	32,723	games: 17. Last season's total: 27.
28 Arsenal (a) 1-2 (Elstrup)		
1 Southampton (a) 2-1 (Elstrup 2)	14,878	
4 Man Utd (h) 0-1	12,576	
1 Leeds Utd (h) 1-0 (Black)	10,185	
16 QPR (a) 1-4 (Hughes)	10,196	
22 Coventry (h) 1-0 (Dowie)	9,336	
29 Norwich (a) 3-1 (Elstrup 3)	12,794	
20 Sunderland (a) 0-2	20,025	
27 Everton (h) 1-1 (Elstrup)	10,047	
1 November		
3 Derby (a) 1-2 (Black)	15,008	
10 Liverpool (a) 0-4	35,207	
17 Man City (h) 2-2 (Dowie, Dreyer pen)	9,564	
24 Villa (h) 2-0 (Black, Elstrup)	16,071	
16 Forest (a) 2-2 (Elstrup 2)	16,480	
8 Arsenal (h) 1-1 (Dreyer pen)	12,506	
16 C. Palace (a) 0-1	15,195	
22 Spurs (a) 1-2 (Dowie)	27,007	

LEAGUE APPEARANCES, including as sub in brackets:
Ever-present, 18 each: Chamberlain, Dreyer, Preece, Hughes, Williams, McDonough, Dreyer, Elstrup, Rees, Farrell, Pembroke, Black. One each as sub: Beaumont, McDonough (9), James (6), Rees (5), Farrell (9) and Nogan.

THE ZENITH DATA SYSTEMS CUP
December
25 W. Ham (h) 5-1 (Farrell 2, Rees, Elstrup, Black) 5,750

MIDAS CLUB

C100 WINNERS
WEEK 42
COMMENCING MONDAY
17th DECEMBER
05125
MR M. HAMLYN, GLEBE ROAD, AMPHILL
ES consolation prizes A5125, B5125, C5125,
D5125, E5125, F5125

TUESDAY 19 DECEMBER
04613
MRS K. McGUINNESS, ABBEY DRIVE,
LUTON
ES consolation prizes A4613, C4613, D4613,
E4613, F4613, G4613

WEDNESDAY 19 DECEMBER
A2781
E. NEWTON, BEALE STREET,
DUNSTABLE
ES consolation prizes B2781, C2781, D2781,
E2781, F2781, G2781

THURSDAY 20 DECEMBER
H0428
Awaiting Confirmation
FRIDAY 21 DECEMBER
A5601
M. HAYDON, VANDYKE ROAD, LEIGHTON
BUZZARD
ES consolation prizes B5601, C5601, D5601,
E5601, F5601, G5601

If you would like to be one of next week's C100 winners please contact your local Newsagent or ring us on LUTON 411622.
Prize: 1. General License Pool, Race Road, Luton, Beds.

● SEAN FARRELL is in the net and his first senior goal has put the Town on the way to success of the season.

He marked his full debut with two goals, starting with this one in the sixth minute to begin the Zenith Cup rout of West Ham.

CHELSEA NEXT

A trip to meet holders Chelsea in the Southern area quarter-final is the prize for hammering the Second Division leaders. West Ham had left out four men, including Tim Breacker, to save them for their Second Division game at Barnsley, which they lost and the Town were without Marvin Johnson, David Preece and Iain Dowie.

Farrell replaced Dowie, and 20-year-old Mark Pembroke's debut suggested to manager Jim Ryan that he will be ready if and when he is needed for First Division soccer.

The boss's reaction to his best win as manager

ZENITH CUP: LUTON TOWN 5 WEST HAM 1

was that it was very nice to see five goals scored, but he would rather have had two or three of them 'banked' for the league game at Spurs.

The cup-tie was a much more relaxed affair than the explosive game at Spurs, with Steve Williams revelling in the chance to control midfield. At times he seemed to be taking the Mickey as the Hamers were outclassed.

As a contest the game was as good as over in the first 37 minutes, when the Town eased into a four-goal lead, with two by Farrell, one by Rees — his first goal in senior football — and a delightful solo by Lars Elstrup.

Kingsley Black made it 5-0 in the 61st minute. West Ham's reply was an 88th minute goal by Kevin Keen, son of former Town

favourite Mike, following up a rebound after Alan Chamberlain made an excellent save from a penalty by Trevor Morley.

MATCH DETAILS

TOWN: Chamberlain; James, McDonough, Dreyer, Harvey, Williams (Beaumont 65 mins), Rees, Pembroke; Black, Elstrup (Nogan 75 mins), Farrell.

WEST HAM: McKnight; Kelly, Gale, Potts, Parry, Livitt, Allen, Keen, Morley; Slater, Kevin, Subs: Rush and Clarke, not used.

THE GOALS: Sean Farrell two, 6 and 37 minutes; Jason Rees 15 minutes; Lars Elstrup 24 minutes; Kingsley Black 61 minutes; Kevin Keen for West Ham, 88 minutes.

OTHER STRIKES: Town four saved and five wide; West Ham five saved and nine wide. Corners: 4-4.

ATTENDANCE: 5,750 — pretty good for a cold December night, and boosted by nearly a thousand Hammers fans.

REFERENCE: Mike James, Hordsham — enjoyed an easy ride in a game where the Town played some exhibition stuff.

ENTERTAINMENT: Five Town goals — what more could we want?