

SEASON ENDS WITH REPEAT OF GREAT ESCAPE SMASH HIT



THE LARGEST crowd Kenilworth Road has housed since the 1988 Littlewoods Cup semi-final revelled in another last-day relegation escape by Luton Town.

The fans had every reason for the uproarious celebrations that marked the end of a campaign in which a young team had again turned out to be real old trouper with their ability to get things right before the final curtain, after fluffing their lines in some of the earlier acts.

The joyful scenes will be a bitter-sweet memory for most of us in view of what happened to Jim Ryan 48 hours later. The boss who worked on a shoestring can look back with pride on what he achieved with the team.

First Division survival has always been a bonus for the club, and the fans showed they knew it by turning out and backing the team for 90 minutes.

Confidence in the boss
And the players who have had a lot of confidence in the manager gave him the best possible birthday present a day early by turning in a performance remarkable for its good football and lack of tension, despite the pressure of the occasion.

And, thank goodness, we saw that there is still a gap between the Town and the Second Division, to which Derby return next season.

Sadly, we also know there is a gap the other way as well, but some of the Town's football was worth a much higher place in the First Division.

Memories of nine games without a win, added to worries that Sunderland might negate every effort by winning at Maine Road, were smashed as the gloom lifted at the end of a very hard season.

It needed an own goal by Mick Harford to break the deadlock, but there was no doubting which side deserved to win.

And while we worry about a weak attack, Derby pair Harford and Dean Saunders, priced at £1.5m, were second best on the day.

Tipped over
The visitors' only real threat amounted to an early volley by Harford which was tipped over the bar, and two breaks.

Saunders made the first, and saw his good run and cross wasted when Ted McMinn should have given Derby by the lead. The volley in space on the Town's right was well off target, behind the team.

ENTERTAINMENT: The first win in ten attempts, well earned by good football, and the Town saved the last day again, and set for a tenth consecutive First Division season. Who could ask for more?

Brian Reports

for a good season by the Chamberlain, who hit the bar.

Peter Shilton was much happier than Chamberlain at the Town stuck to their ball principles, and some over the top.

It was more than individual effort which made the difference, but thought Jason David Preece and David Preece and Pembroke were men who did not.

Assured
The traditional last-day celebrations were just about assured when Lars Elstrup headed the Town's second goal just under two minutes after the interval, with Derby looking like the team they were, already resigned to their fate.

The Town had done well to keep their composure through the first 41 minutes, in which Elstrup and Kingsley Black threatened great things on the flanks.

Not surprisingly, Farrell, with little First Division experience, found Wright a bit too know- ing, but the young striker's endeavours made that Wright could not afford to desert his defensive duties too often.

Bad news
Later the evening vanished for a few minutes as news came through on thousands of transistors. Sunderland had taken a 2-1 lead.

Pictures by Josh Levy

Mr. Ryan insisted that his men should not think about events at Maine Road.

Manchester City's 3-2 victory sent Sunderland back to the Second Division which they should never have been allowed to leave a year ago and justice was done.

And it was all the more satisfying to know that after so many wobbles the Town had at last done the job firmly by their own efforts.

Party piece
The second goal was a real party piece to fit the occasion, a prime example of what good football can achieve.

Preece whacked a left-wing corner to the far side of goal and John Dreyer headed the ball back, from right to left. Black returned it, so that the Derby defence was facing all ways, and Elstrup went into the right place to head home from close range.

So too, when Elstrup and Kingsley Black threatened great things on the flanks.

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And the Town's opening goal was more the fluke it might have looked.

Harford said that he jumped to try to head clear, felt the ball skim his hair, and carry on into the net. "Just one of those things," he said.

Accuracy

Mr. Ryan accepted that, but pointed out that the goal owed a lot to the accuracy of Rees's free kick.

Long hours of practice in training led to it. Said the manager: "If those free kicks are hit right they are very difficult to defend. And you hit them knowing that if they get any sort of deflection, or none at all, they can end up in the net."



● WE'VE DONE IT!: The dressing room celebrations

● THE CLINCHER: Lars Elstrup's 18th goal of the season makes it 2-0, with Shilton going the wrong way.

The First Division

	HOME	AWAY
	P W D L F A	P W D L F A
Manchester City	38 15 5 0 51 10	9 8 13 5 83
Liverpool	38 14 3 24 13 9	4 6 35 7 76
Leeds	38 11 6 24 17 9	3 7 24 24 69
Man City	38 12 2 54 63 7	5 7 19 24 64
Man Utd	37 11 3 43 16 5	6 8 29 28 62
Wimbledon	38 8 6 52 82 6	8 5 25 24 56
Nottm For	38 11 4 44 21 3	8 8 23 29 54
Everton	38 9 5 52 45 4	7 8 24 31 51
Chelsea	38 9 5 52 45 4	7 8 24 31 51
Tottenham	38 7 9 39 25 2	6 12 16 33 41
QPR	38 8 5 62 72 4	4 5 10 17 31 46
Sheff Utd	38 9 3 72 33 4	4 11 13 32 46
So' ton	38 9 4 43 32 3	3 13 25 47 45
Norwich	38 9 3 72 32 4	4 12 14 32 45
Coventry	38 10 6 33 16 1	5 13 12 33 44
A Villa	38 7 9 39 25 2	6 12 16 33 41
Luton Town	38 6 6 75 16 2	4 12 23 44 34
Sunderland	38 6 6 83 26 3	2 11 6 13 39 24
Derby Co	38 7 8 83 26 3	2 11 6 13 39 24

● Two points deducted. * One point deducted.

The season's record

BARCLAYS LEAGUE DIV 1

August			
25	Palace (h) 1-1 (Dowie)	9,583	
28	Arsenal (a) 1-2 (Elstrup)	32,723	
September			
1	Southampton (a) 2-1 (Elstrup 2)	14,878	
4	Man United (h) 0-1	12,576	
8	Leeds Utd (h) 1-0 (Black)	16,195	
15	QPR (a) 1-0 (Hughes)	10,196	
22	Coventry (h) 1-0 (Dowie)	8,336	
29	Norwich (a) 3-1 (Elstrup 3)	12,794	
October			
20	Sunderland (a) 0-2	20,025	
27	Everton (h) 1-1 (Elstrup)	10,047	
November			
15	Derby (a) 1-2 (Preece)	25,207	
10	Liverpool (a) 0-4	9,564	
17	Man City (h) 2-2 (Dowie, Dreyer pen)	10,071	
24	A Villa (h) 2-0 (Black, Elstrup)	16,071	
December			
1	N. Forest (a) 2-2 (Elstrup 2)	16,498	
8	Arsenal (h) 1-1 (Dreyer pen)	12,506	
16	Palace (a) 1-2 (Preece)	27,007	
22	Spurs (a) 1-2 (Dowie)	10,004	
29	Sheff Utd (h) 0-1	11,050	
31	Chelsea (h) 2-0 (DG, Black)	11,050	
1991			
January			
12	Southampton (a) 0-2	4,521	
19	Liverpool (a) 1-2 (Elstrup)	27,016	
February			
2	QPR (h) 1-2 (Black)	8,476	
23	Liverpool (h) 3-1 (Black, Dowie 2)	12,032	
March			
24	Forest (h) 1-0 (Dowie)	9,577	
5	Man City (a) 3-3	20,404	
9	A Villa (a) 2-1 (Mountfield DG, Pembroke)	9,521	
13	Coventry (a) 1-2 (Preece)	11,752	
16	Norwich (h) 0-1	17,752	
23	Man Utd (a) 1-4 (Preece)	18,487	
30	Sheff Utd (a) 1-2 (Elstrup)	11,222	
April			
1	Spurs (h) 0-0	12,603	
6	Chelsea (a) 3-3 (Elstrup, Farrell, Black)	12,603	
13	Wimbledon (h) 1-2 (Rudger)	11,157	
20	Sunderland (a) 1-2 (Rudger)	19,809	
May			
4	Everton (a) 1-1	12,889	
11	Derby (h) 2-4 (Harford DG, Elstrup)	12,889	

LEAGUE APPEARANCES, including as sub in brackets: Chamberlain and Dreyer ever-presents, 38 each;

Elstrup, Preece and Black 37; Beaumont 29/4; Harvey 29/3; Johnson 24/2; McDonough 21/5; Hughes 17; Pembroke 17; Williams 15/1; Rodger 14; Rees 11/10; Farrell 11/9; James 10/7; Nogan 1/0; Holgrave 1/1; Telfer 1/1; Dowie 2/3; Breaker 8. Number of players used, 38 games. 21. Last season's total: 27.

LEAGUE GOALS: Elstrup 15; Dowie and Black 7; Dreyer 3 pens; Rodger 2; Hughes 1; James 1; Pembroke 1; Preece 1; Farrell 1; DG 3 (Cundy, Chelsea; Mountfield, A Villa, Harford Derby).

THE FA CUP

7	January	5 Sheff Utd (a) 3-1 (Farrell, Elstrup 2).....
8		26 W. Ham (h) 1-1 (Black).....
12		30 W. Ham (a) 0-5.....
13		
19	APPEARANCES:	Three each by Chamberlain, Dreyer, Harvey, Pembroke, McDonough, Pre- trup and Black. Farrell 2(1), Williams 2, Dow- Beaumont 1. One as sub: Rees and Johnson.
10		
5		
12		

GOALS: Elstrup 2, Farrell and Black one each.

THE RUMBLEBONE CUP

14	September	25 Bradford (h) 1-1 (Harvey)
15	October	10 Bradford (a) 1-1 (Black) — lost on pens
16		
16	APPEARANCES:	Chamberlain 2, Droyer 2, Beaumont 2, Hughes 2, Preece 2, Black 2, Dowie 2, Harvey 2, Rees 1 (1); James 1 (1); Nogan 1 (1); Breaker 1, Williams 1, Johnson 1).

GOALS: Harvey and Black one each.

THE ZENITH DS CUP

221 13	December	19 W. Ham (h) 5-1 (Farrell 2, Rees, Elstrup, Black) 5,790
604 14		
752 18	February	18 Chelsea (a) 1-1 (Dreyer). Won on pens..... 3,849
487 18		26 C. Palace (a) 1-3 (Rees)..... 17,750
322 18	APPEARANCES:	Chamberlain 3, Dreyer 3, Elstrup 3, Rees 3, Pembroke 3, James 2 (1), Beaumont 2 (1), Rees 3, Preece 2, Dowie 2, Johnson 2, McDonough 1. One each as sub: Nogan and Jackson.
603 18		
219 18		
157 18		

GOALS: Farrell and Rees 2 each. Elstrup, Black and Dreyer one each.

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Match Details

LUTON TOWN 2 DERBY 0

(Half-time 1-0)

TOWN: Chamberlain; Beaumont, Dreyer, McDonough, Harvey; Rees (James 78 mins), Pembroke; Preece; Black, Farrell (Nogan 78 mins), Elstrup.

DERBY: Shilton; Sage, Wright, Patterson, Forsyth; Micklewhite, G. Williams, F. Williams (Hebbard 68 mins), McMinn (Crosby 11/1); Saunders, Harford. GOALS: Mick Harford headed own goal, 41 minutes, accidentally touching in a free kick by Jason Rees; Lars Elstrup, 47 minutes, close-range header after David Preece corner and headed passes by John Dreyer and Kingsley Black.

OTHER STRIKES: Town eight saved and seven missed. Derby six saved, three wide and one hit the bar. Corners: 6-5 to the Town.

REFEREE: George Courtney, County Durham. Given an easy game as both sides got on with it. ATTENDANCE: 12,889, the highest of the season, and how well the fans responded to the need to get behind the team.

ENTERTAINMENT: The first win in ten attempts, well earned by good football, and the Town saved the last day again, and set for a tenth consecutive First Division season. Who could ask for more?

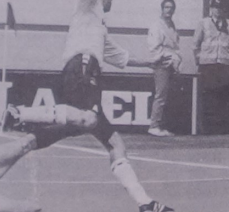
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exact hearing.



● SO CLOSE: Sean Farrell, on the end of a cross by Mark Pembroke hits his shot inches the wrong side of the post.

exact hearing.



● ATTACKING DEFENDER: John Dreyer with an early header from a David Preece free kick which just cleared the bar.