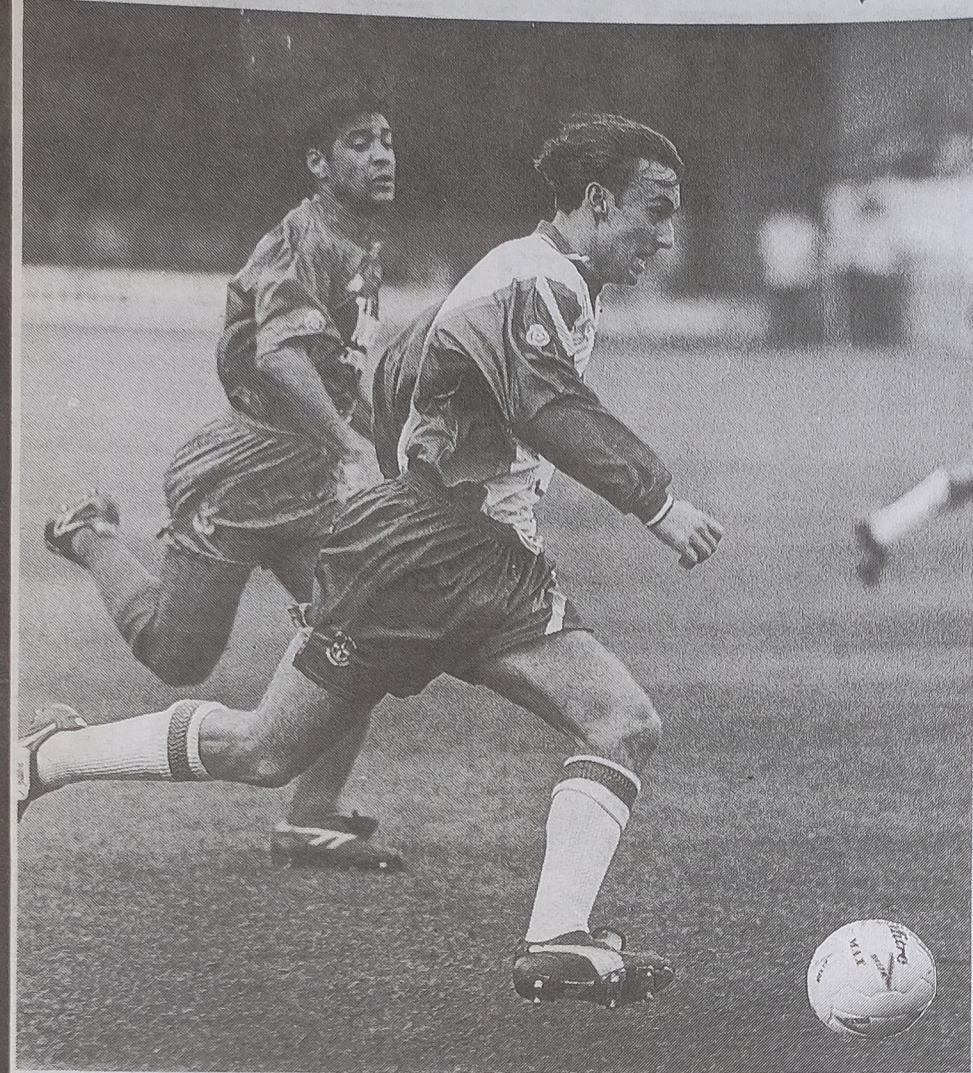


Sports News



A GEM OF A PERFECT BIFF-BANG

TWO home points that were there for the taking got away from Luton Town at Kenilworth Road on Saturday.

In very difficult circumstances they had managed to turn things round against a Crystal Palace team that was hardly interested in anything more than biff and bang.

Mistake

And only a linesman's mistake prevented the Town taking the victory they needed so badly.

As manager David Pleat says, it is now a case of fight and battle for survival in the First Division, and his understrength team,

By Sports Editor Brian Swain

missing Mick Harford, answered that call bravely.

It was hard to know why the football quality was not genuine Luton Town.

Nerves and tension are inevitable because of the league position, despite Saturday's result pushing the Town out of the bottom three for the first time since New Year's Day.

Bombing

Palace's awful method, to bomb their way through — they chalked up four of the game's five yellow cards — did nothing to provide entertainment.

As with Sheffield United a couple of weeks ago, I felt the Town were dragged down to the opposition's level.

Without Harford I doubted the point of many of the high crosses played into the middle. Yet 19-year-old Jamie Campbell, on his home debut, had a hard fight against Eric Young and Andy Thorn, and came through with some style, with Mr. Pleat well pleased with the way he filled the gap.

And at least both sides had good right wingers.

Fitting

It was fitting that the scorers to brighten a dull match should be Eddie McGoldrick and Scott Oakes.

Close behind was Mark Pembroke, who rampaged through a midfield department Palace would apparently prefer to ignore.

Unfortunately his finishing did not match his industry, but that all-round determination ran through the whole team.

And once more the Town hardly had the rub of the green in the most crucial decisions.

Hands?

The first game in the 17th minute, Mervyn Day punted a long low clearance to Brian Stein in midfield. He laid off a first-time pass to Oakes

on the wing, and he made ground and hit a cross to the near post. Campbell went up for it with goalkeeper Nigel Martyn, the ball fell to Stein and his volley looked well on target until it hit Eric Young's hand.

"Accidental" was the referee's verdict, on the grounds that Young could not have had time to do more than he did, half-turn away from the force of the shot, so the penalty was not given.

Four minutes later David Elleray, a Harrow schoolmaster, was quicker to punish a challenge by Trevor Peake on Mark Bright in midfield.

Awful

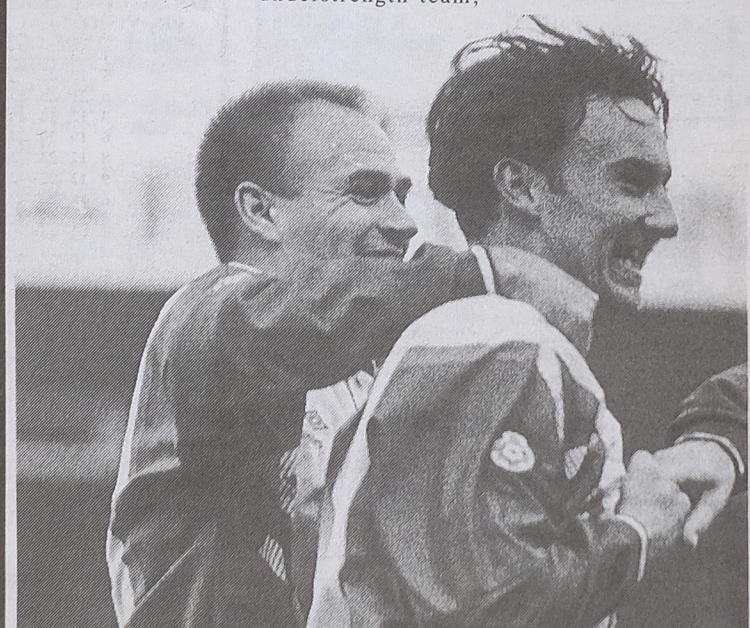
It may have been a harsh decision, but the Town made it worse by awful defending as Thorn hit the free kick into the box.

With Young up for the set piece, the defence failed to attack the ball in the air, and it bounced kindly for McGoldrick to pinch a yard on Richard Harvey and loop a header into the far corner.

Early in the season that would have been the end of it, but the Town gritted their teeth and fought their way back into contention.

Oakes hit a good cross which Stein headed on, and Pembroke, on the six yards line, put his header over the bar in

● **FLYING:** Scott Oakes breaks clear of Richard Shaw, who was eventually subbed to end his unhappy afternoon.



● **GOOD LAD:** David Preece is first to join the celebrations for Oakes's first league goal at Kenilworth Road.



● **DOUBLE COVER:** Preece in charge in a one against two situation.

Local soccer tables

Campri South Midlands League

PREMIER DIVISION										
	P	W	D	L	F	A	P			
Leighton Town	31	24	5	2	88	22	77			
MK Borough	29	22	1	6	76	22	57			
Biggleswade Town	32	19	6	7	72	32	63			
Shillington	30	19	4	7	62	25	61			
Leverstock Green	31	18	5	8	50	24	59			
Wingate	28	16	6	7	43	54				
Brache Sparta	30	16	5	9	61	31	53			
Hoddesdon Town	29	15	7	7	53	32	52			
Harpden Town	33	13	10	10	62	50	49			
Langford	31	14	5	12	39	32	47			
Oxford City	25	13	6	6	63	31	45			
Potters Bar Town	26	11	8	7	50	38	41			
Wolverton	24	11	2	11	35	34	35			
Pistone	28	8	6	14	40	67	30			
Leitchworth GC	26	9	2	15	41	46	29			
Pirton	30	7	8	15	28	50	29			
Welwyn GC	32	7	8	17	46	73	29			
Totternhoe	21	10	11	4	41	37				
Ruckingham Athletic	26	5	4	17	37	54	19			
New Bradwell	29	4	5	20	25	66	17			
61FC Luton	31	4	4	23	37	100	16			
Winslow United	29	2	0	27	13	132	6			

RESERVE DIVISION TWO

	P	W	D	L	F	A	P
Potters Bar Town	25	24	0	1	107	12	72
Leverstock Green	23	20	2	1	85	17	52
Toddington Rovers	24	16	6	5	58	25	50
Walden Rangers	25	13	7	5	59	32	46
Bedford United	22	14	2	6	65	32	44
Oxford City	24	14	1	9	62	32	43
Caddington	25	11	4	10	52	68	37
Shenley	22	10	4	8	54	29	34
New Bradwell	22	10	4	8	45	45	34
Delco Products	21	10	3	8	62	42	33
Aschcroft	25	9	6	10	58	46	33
Amphill Town	28	10	3	15	37	58	33
Risborough	23	7	3	13	30	53	24
Sandy Albion	26	6	2	18	30	90	20
"Tring Athletic"	27	6	1	20	31	75	16
Ickleford	22	3	5	14	28	56	14
Fiamstead	25	3	4	18	26	76	13
Winslow United	23	2	3	18	21	122	9

*Three points deducted.

The Luton League

DIVISION ONE										
	P	W	D	L	F	A	P			
Luton Old Boys	28	22	4	2	75	31	70			
Aschcroft	27	22	2	2	67	23	68			
Bedford United	27	19	3	5	82	33	60			
Bedford Town	28	18	3	7	74	44	57			
Shenley	26	16	3	7	69	30	51			
Toddington Rovers	27	12	7	8	54	42	43			
Amphill Town	27	12	5	10	51	42	41			
Delco Products	28	12	4	12	50	42	40			
Ickleford	29	11	9	11	44	47	38			
"Tring Athletic"	21	10	11	4	41	37				
Risborough	27	9	9	9	39	45	36			
Cranfield United	29	8	10	11	42	48	34			
Potters Bar Cru	29	10	3	16	70	74	33			
Embsayton	30	9	6	15	42	63	33			
Fiamstead	26	9	5	12	47	50	32			
Walden Rangers	28	6	10	12	45	58	28			
Sandy Albion	27	6	7	14	44	65	25			
Shefford Town	27	7	4	16	30	54	25			
Caddington	30	3	5	22	31	83	14			
Stony Stratford	28	1	6	21	27	125	9			

*Three points deducted.

RESERVE DIVISION ONE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	P
Leighton Town	26	20	5	1	84	22	71
Thame United	24	18	4	2	71	18	58
Biggleswade Town	30	16	8	6	54	34	56
Langford	30	16	6	8	55	32	54
Welwyn GC	27	14	8	5	58	35	50
Shillington	26	13	7	6	51	31	46
61FC Luton	27	11	10	6	57	41	43
Leitchworth GC	28	12	6	10	45	39	42
MK Borough	30	11	8	11	49	51	41
Hemel Hempstead	27	8	11	6	35	34	35
Wolverton	24	10	4	10	45	47	34
Pirton	27	8	9	10	34	38	33
"Buckingham Ath"	20	9	6	5	41	25	32
Barton Rovers	27	7	11	8	41	39	32
Pistone	27	8	7	12	42	46	31
Totternhoe	28	7	7	14	41	49	28
Brache Sparta	26	7	7	12	33	42	28
Harpden Town	29	6	5	18	38	73	23
Potters Bar Cru	28	6	2	24	48	115	20
Shefford Town	28	4	6	18	27	81	18
Cranfield	27	3	3	21	21	79	12

*One point deducted.

Town Match verdict ★★ ★

STRIKE IS REPLY TO FOOTBALL

the attempt to send it wide of Martyn.

Missed

To balance that, McGoldrick missed a clear chance at the other end after Bright made a good break down the left and pulled a low cross back to the edge of the box.

The Palace winger was in plenty of space but dragged his shot wide.

Palace shaded the first half, but the Town were on top in the second, with Oakes increasingly prominent.

His manager had implied him to run at players, while Oakes had asked Stein to work more on the one-two.

Both requests were answered positively.

Deserved

Half-chances had escaped at both ends before the deserved equaliser came in the 68th minute.

Peake won a tackle in midfield and laid off a short pass to Oakes, just inside the Palace half.

The quickest man in the Town side made his pace count with a run down the wing before playing a short pass to Stein, who gave Palace the old one-two with a flick into the path of Oakes.

The youngster met it with a tremendous right foot volley, and from an acute angle the ball whipped across Martyn, hit the far post, and bounced into the net.

Action pictures by Josh Levy

With a tremendous right foot volley, and from an acute angle the ball whipped across Martyn, hit the far post, and bounced into the net.

Likely

From then on the Town looked the more likely winners, and Chris Kamara was doubly unlucky not to get his first goal for the club.

John Dreyer laid back a short pass to him from a corner by Oakes, and Kamara's low shot hit the outside of the post.

Then, with six minutes to go, Kamara's quickness off the mark cost him a goal.

David Preece had knocked a right wing corner to the far side of the penalty area. Julian James did well to head the ball forward, and Kamara burst through and stabbed his shot past Martyn.

The Palace defence had not attempted to stop him: they simply advanced to try to play him offside.

The linesman thought they had done it, and the goal was ruled out.

And to be fair to the man with the flag none of us in the Pressbox was at all surprised by the decision.

MATCH DETAILS

LUTON TOWN 1 C. PALACE 1 (Half-time: 0-1)

TOWN: Day, James, Peake, Dreyer, Harvey; Oakes, Kamara, Pembroke, Preece; Campbell, Stein (Hughes 86 mins).

PALACE: Martyn; Humphrey, Thorn, Young, Shaw (Sinnott 65 mins); McGoldrick, Rodger, Southgate, Mortimer (Whyte, 71 mins); Coleman, Bright.

THE GOALS: Eddie McGoldrick for Palace, 21st minute, free header after free kick by Andy Thorn allowed to bounce in the Town penalty area; Scott Oakes for the Town, 68 minutes, cracking right foot volley into far corner after a run down the right and a one-two with Brian Stein.

OTHER ATTEMPTS: Town three saved, ten wide, one hit a post, one netted and wrongly disallowed for the Town.

REFEREE: David Elleray, Harrow: A referee's fault that the linesman was deceived by the "runner" was ruled out.

BOOKED: Trevor Peake of the Town for hands, three Palace men for fouls: Eddie McGoldrick, Mark Bright and Gareth Southgate.

ATTENDANCE: 8,591, with the locals apparently enjoying Palace would not be attractive opposition.

ENTERTAINMENT: Not too good, with the Town not being out to play football against a Town side for those who like to see passing football and an outsmarting brawl.

"The way we played we deserved to get at least one goal."

Frenetic

Mervyn Day, making his first appearance in Division One for seven years following his loan move from Leeds, found the game a bit frenetic.

But he added that he was glad to see Luton playing the nice football against a team that was aggressive and difficult to play against.

Deceived

When James made his header Kamara was well outside. But he was quick off the mark, as were the Palace defenders, and they changed places so rapidly that the quickness of the scissor movement deceived the eye.

At the end the Town knew they should have taken three points.

"It was disappointing not to win, but there is still a long way to go, and I think we have got a chance to escape," said Preece, veteran of four Town hounding jobs.

Oakes, bright and breezy as a man as well as a player, enjoyed his second league goal after the instant pass by Stein.

Oakes goes into every match believing it will be his day to score, and he disclosed that at half time he had asked Stein to try the one-two pass a bit more often.

It paid off and the young winger added:

The First Division

	HOME					AWAY						
	P	W	D	L	F	A	P	W	D	L	F	A
Leeds	32	9	7	0	27	12	8	6	2	31	13	21
Man United	30	10	5	1	28	9	7	6	1	23	13	21
Sheff Wed	31	10	4	2	33	21	5	5	5	17	21	21
Man City	32	10	3	3	24	13	5	5	6	21	26	26
Liverpool	30	9	4	2	23	13	3	9	3	12	14	24
Arsenal	30	8	5	2	32	15	3	6	6	19	20	20
Everton	31	7	7	2	24	12	4	3	8	17	23	23
Aston Villa	31	9	2	4	23	13	3	4	9	12	22	22
Chelsea	32	5	7	4	25	24	5	5	6	16	22	22
C. Palace	32	5	5	6	20	24	5	7	6	18	28	28
Windsor	31	7	6	4	25	16	2	6	13	13	21	21
Newcastle	32	7	3	3	22	16	5	6	7	18	25	25
QPR	32	9	5	4	17	17	5	6	5	17	19	19
Oldham	32	7	5	4	31	27	3	2	11	15	25	25
Coventry	31	5	5	5	16	10	4	4	8	13	20	20
Nottm Forest	28	6	5	3	27	23	3	3	8	15	19	19
Tottenham	29	4	2	9	18	20	6	3	5	19	19	19
Sheff Utd.	30	6	6	6	18	16	2	6	13	13	21	21
Luton Town	32	6	4	8	18	14	0	4	12	8	22	22
Notts Co.	30	5	3	6	18	20	2	5	9	12	22	22
Southampton	30	3	5	7	11	24	3	5	7	17	21	21
West Ham	29	3	5	6	12	17	3	4	8	14	26	26