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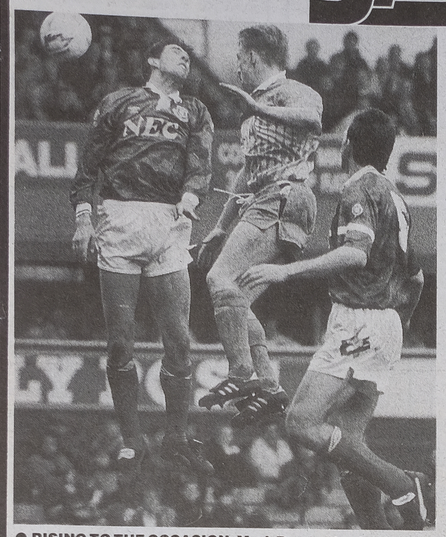
Sports News

LUTON TOO

Everton boss is relieved to snatch point



● RISING TO THE OCCASION: Mark Pembridge in action.

IT WAS A case of more praise than points at Goodison Park on Saturday when an admirable Luton Town performance had Everton and their fans worried stiff for much of a fascinating contest.

They took a well deserved lead, and held it until the 51st minute, and then came back strongly after the blow of conceding an equaliser.

And Howard Kendall was the manager pleased to take a point on a day when the quality of the Town's football had him forecasting: "They're too good to go down."

Good passing, well organised defence in numbers, and sharp counter-attacking had put the Town so close to their first away win in over a year.

REPORTS BY BRIAN SWAIN

Credit

Kendall, who made a crucial tactical change at the interval to revive a team that had been very much second best until then, said: "Luton pass the ball well. And it frustrates your players and crowd when a team comes and keeps the ball away from you.

"The crowd wants you to dominate, but we couldn't, and all credit to Luton for the way they played, especially in the first half.

"I am certain they have enough quality to survive."

And quality was the hallmark of a Town show that delighted the travelling fans.

It ran throughout the team to make a mockery of the First Division table.

The only problem was a lack of biting pace and finishing.

Mick Harford, back after suspension, took a long time to get into the game on a cold blustery afternoon, but spread his talents remarkably, dropping back to help midfield and defence.

Chris Kamara, with a broken finger protected by padding, was as forceful as ever, and had a storming game in the middle.

Persistence

Mark Pembridge was a touch below his best, but still had too much power and persistence for an Everton midfield that was outclassed on passing ability.

Peter Beardsley, so full of pace and trickery, must have been wishing he had a Pembridge alongside him as the home side struggled to make any impression for a long time.

David Preece looked younger and sprightlier in his difficult role wide on the left, and Jason Rees came in to do a good job on the right.

Brian Stein was the old fox living off his wits, experience the provider of a cunning instinct to get into the right places to compensate for diminishing pace.

And that instinct gave him a richly-deserved second goal of the season, after only seven minutes, to set the stage for a game Everton were never allowed to relish.

Mervyn Day had only one difficult save to make, apart from the clever header that beat him for the equaliser. He too uses experience to good effect: his other saves looked easy because he set himself in the right position well before the ball arrived.

John Dreyer and Trevor Peake made defending look easy, and Richard Harvey and Julian James got on with things doggedly against men who have been known to destroy fullbacks.

Unhappy

Mr. Kendall was a very unhappy manager at the interval, and glad to be only one down.

The Town had taken the lead with the first serious goal attempt of the game. Pembridge was brought down by Alan Harper 30 yards from goal, and his free kick was a smasher.

"The next time the Welsh team gets together Mark should take Neville Southall aside and suggest they both practice free kicks," joked David Pleat as he relived the moment that led to the Town's goal.

Ferocious

Southall was beaten by the ferocious power and accuracy of the free kick, but seemed to have escaped as the ball hit the underside of the bar.

Dave Watson had time to clear, but Stein, who made a dummy run over the ball before Pembridge hit it, had kept running, and as Watson miskicked nipped in score from close range.

The quality of the Town's passing had Everton baffled for a long time after that, and the pity was that we did not have another goal to finish off the frustrated Merseysiders.

Corners

Set pieces produced some likely moments, with Martin Keown shooting straight at Day from an Everton corner and Kamara cracking a drive narrowly wide from one at the other end.

Beardsley, the outstanding talent among the blue shirts, was forced deeper to try to get involved, and Southall was pleased to make a good catch after Harford, Preece and Harvey had engineered a sweeping move. It ended with Harford heading powerfully from Harvey's cross.

Everton stirred for the last five minutes of the first half, and should have equalised when Stein lost possession in midfield.

Caught

The Town were caught by John Ebbrell's through ball into the path of Peter Beagrie, and day narrowed the angle and spread himself to save with his legs.

For the second half Kendall took off Matt Jackson and sent on Andy Hinchcliffe, who was a better attacking

The season so far

● Results showing Town score first, home and away, Town scorers, attendances and league position:

Barclays League Div One

1991

AUGUST

17 West Ham (a) 0-0 ..... 25,079 -
21 Coventry (a) 0-5 ..... 10,084 -
24 Liverpool (h) 0-0 ..... 11,132 -
27 Arsenal (a) 0-2 ..... 25,898 21
31 Chelsea (a) 1-4 (Gray) 17,457 22

SEPTEMBER

4 Southampton (h) 2-1 (Gray, Harvey) 8,055 19
7 Wimbledon (a) 0-3 ..... 3,231 20
14 Oldham (h) 2-1 (Harford 2) 9,005 17
17 QPR (h) 0-1 ..... 9,185 19
21 Man Utd (a) 0-5 ..... 46,491 21
28 Notts Co (h) 1-1 (Gray) 7,629 20

OCTOBER

5 A. Villa (a) 0-4 ..... 18,722 21
19 Sheff Wed (h) 2-2 (Harford, Nogan) 9,401 21
26 Norwich (a) 0-1 ..... 10,514 21

NOVEMBER

2 Everton (h) 0-1 ..... 8,002 21
16 Tottenham (a) 1-4 (Harford) 27,543 22
23 Man City (h) 2-2 (Harford, Dreyer) 10,031 22
30 Sheff Utd (a) 1-1 (Telfer) 21,804 22

DECEMBER

7 Leeds (h) 0-2 ..... 11,550 22
20 Coventry (h) 1-0 (Harford) 7,533 22
26 Arsenal (h) 1-0 (Harford) 12,655 22
28 Chelsea (h) 2-0 (Harford, Dreyer pen) 10,738 20

1992

JANUARY

1 Nottm Forest (a) 1-1 (Pembridge) 23,809 19
11 Liverpool (a) 1-2 (OG Tanner) 35,095 20
18 West Ham (h) 0-1 ..... 11,088 22

FEBRUARY

1 Sheff Wed (a) 2-3 (Preece, Oakes) 22,281 22
8 Norwich (h) 2-0 (Preece, Harford) 8,554 21
15 Man City (a) 0-4 ..... 22,137 21
22 Sheff Utd (h) 2-1 (Stein, Harford) 9,003 20
25 C. Palace (a) 1-1 (Pembridge pen) 12,109 20
29 Leeds (a) 0-2 ..... 28,231 20

MARCH

7 C. Palace (h) 1-1 (Oakes) 8,591 19
11 Tottenham (h) 0-0 ..... 11,494 20
14 Everton (a) 1-1 (Stein) 16,707 19

LEAGUE APPEARANCES, including as sub in brackets:
Ever-presents, 34 each, Dreyer and Pembridge; Peake 30, Stein 26(5), Preece 26(4), Harvey 25(1), Harford 21, James 20, Kamara 20, Telfer 17(3), Chamberlain 17, Oakes 11(6), Gray 9(2), McDonough 9, Nogan 6(8), Hughes 6(8), Campbell 4(7), Day 3, Linton 2(1), Rees 2, Salton (1).

Before transfers: Sutton 14 (loan), Rodger 11(1), Jackson 7(2), Beaumont 6(3), Thompson 5, Black 4, Farrell 3(1), Holsgrove 1, Glover 1 (loan).

Number of players used: 30, nine more than last season.

LEAGUE GOALS: Harford 9, Gray 3, Dreyer 2 (1 pen), Harvey 2, Preece 2, Pembridge 2 (1 pen), Oakes 2, Stein 2, Nogan 1, Telfer 1, OG 1 (Tanner, Liverpool).

FA CUP, THIRD ROUND

Jan 4 Sheff Utd (a) 0-4 12,201

APPEARANCES: One each by Chamberlain, James, Peake, Dreyer, Harvey, Telfer, Kamara, Pembridge, Preece, Oakes and Stein. One as sub by Campbell.

THE RUMBELOWS CUP

Rd 2(1) Sep 25: Birmingham (h) 2-2 (Gray, Nogan) 6,315
Rd 2(2) Oct 9: Birmingham (a) 2-3 (Gray 2) 13,252

APPEARANCES: Two each by Chamberlain, Jackson, Preece, Beaumont, Pembridge, Thompson, Telfer and Gray. Stein 1(1). One each by Peake, Harvey, Dreyer, Rodger and Harford. Nogan two as sub. Salton one as sub.

Zenith Data Systems Cup

Rd 2: Oct 22 Ipswich (a) 1-1 (Telfer). Lost on pens 5,750

APPEARANCES: One each by Chamberlain, Telfer, Rodger, Salton, Allpress, Pembridge, Nogan, James, Hughes, Williams and Harford. One each as sub: Rees and Campbell.

The First Division

	HOME						AWAY						
	P	W	D	L	F	A	W	D	L	F	A	P
Leeds	34	10	7	0	32	13	8	6	3	32	17	67
Man United	31	10	5	1	28	9	8	6	1	25	14	65
Sheff Wed	33	10	4	3	34	24	6	5	5	19	21	57
Man City	33	10	3	4	24	14	5	5	6	21	26	53
Liverpool	32	10	4	2	24	13	3	9	4	12	15	52
Arsenal	32	9	5	2	34	16	4	6	6	21	20	50
Everton	33	7	8	2	25	13	4	4	8	17	23	45
QPR	34	4	9	4	21	18	6	6	5	18	19	45
Chelsea	34	5	7	5	25	25	6	5	6	17	22	45
C. Palace	34	6	5	6	21	24	5	7	5	23	29	45
Aston Villa	33	9	2	5	23	14	3	5	9	12	22	43
Wimbledon	33	8	5	4	25	16	2	7	7	14	25	42
Nottm Forest	30	7	5	3	29	23	4	3	8	17	19	41
Norwich City	33	7	5	4	22	17	3	6	8	18	27	41
Oldham	34	8	5	4	35	30	3	2	12	16	27	40
Coventry	33	5	5	6	16	12	5	4	8	14	20	39
Sheff Utd	32	6	5	5	20	19	4	2	10	28	34	37
Tottenham	31	4	2	10	18	22	6	4	5	19	19	36
Southampton	32	4	5	7	12	24	4	5	7	18	21	34
Luton Town	34	7	6	4	18	14	0	5	12	9	43	32
Notts Co	32	5	4	6	18	20	2	5	10	15	26	30
West Ham	31	3	5	7	12	19	3	4	9	14	27	27

● Not including last night's game, Notts County v Everton.

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Town Match verdict ★★★

GOOD TO GO DOWN

● SO CLOSE: Neville Southall saves from Mick Harford.

prospect, and changed the formation.

Everton played three at the back, five in mid-field, with two wide pushing up, and Mo Johnson and Beagrie as out and out attackers.

Mark Ward switched flanks and did more work inside. Everton looked a better side, as they had to after being outplayed for so long.

Beardsley blazed over the bar after Ward and Harper set him up, but the equaliser came six minutes into the second half.

Beagrie was half-stopped on a run down the left, but Hinchcliffe was in support and got a yard clear of James to cross for Johnston to glance a clever header into the corner of the net, off the inside of the post.

That might have set the stage for Everton to complete their revival with a winner, but the Town settled down again, rode the mini-storm, and got back into gear.

Chances

Both sides had chances to win it. Ward put an 18-yarder over the bar and Harford, at full stretch, was just wide from a cross by Rees which was helped on by Pembridge.

Ward wasted a clear chance when he was off target from close range from a cross by Beagrie, while Harford put a header over the bar from a cross by Preece.

Pembridge took a quick free kick which almost embarrassed Southall again: he was nowhere near saving as the ball passed the wrong side of the bar by a few inches.

Strong

The Town came on strongly again at the end, and Harford made a wrong decision with the last chance of the game, after more good work by Preece.

He tried his luck with a shot that was blocked by two defenders when a short pass to his right would have put Jamie Campbell in with a much clearer chance.

At the end, Everton fans were waiting for the whistle as avidly as visitors usually do when the scores are level. What a shame the Town had won on points without being able to deliver a knock-out.

Action pictures by Josh Levy

● WELL UP: Mick Harford's power in the air is a problem for the Everton defence.

GOODISON MATCH DETAILS

EVERTON 1 LUTON 1 (Half-time: 0-1)

LUTON TOWN: Day; James, Peake, Dreyer, Harvey; Rees (Hughes 73 mins), Kamara, Pembridge, Preece; Harford, Stein (Campbell 82 mins).

EVERTON: Southall; Jackson (Hinchcliffe HT), Watson, Keown, Ablett; Ward, Ebbrell, Harper, Beagrie; Beardsley, Johnston (Warzycha 80 mins).

THE GOALS: Brian Stein for the Town, seventh minute, pouncing after Dave Watson missed with his clearance attempt from a free kick by Mark Pembridge which came down off the underside of the bar; Mo Johnston for Everton, 51 minutes, glancing header from a cross by Andy Hinchcliffe.

OTHER ATTEMPTS: Town five saved, five wide and one hit the bar and led to a goal; Everton two saved and seven wide. Corners: 5-2 to the Town.

REFEREE: Keren Barratt, Coventry: Had a good game, and kept it on the move, making every effort to deal with the minor skirmishes without use of the book.

BOOKED: Mark Pembridge for an 83rd-minute foul on Peter Beardsley, having been warned earlier. It was the fiery midfielder's fifth yellow card of the season.

ATTENDANCE: 16,707 on a bitterly cold and windy day, with the small Luton contingent sometimes outshouting the home fans.

ENTERTAINMENT: A smashing match, with the Town well on top in the first half and Everton geting back to equality in the second, but still lucky to save a point.

● FIRST BLOOD: Dave Watson is grounded and Neville Southall is beaten as Brian Stein carefully steers the Town into the lead at Goodison Park.

Small consolation

HAVING SEEN their teams struggling with little success to play flowing football, managers David Pleat and Peter Shreeves were left to take a little pleasure from a poor match.

"At least we didn't lose" was the joint refrain, with Tottenham happier because the Town would have got within two points of them if it had been a home win. Mr. Shreeve's point was underlined a few days later. While the Town were drawing with Everton Spurs lost at home to Sheffield Wednesday and have been dragged deeper into the relegation zone of fear.

Cancelled out

At Kenilworth Road two weakened teams cancelled each other out in almost every department, including offside manoeuvres.

LUTON TN 0 SPURS 0

And if the Town had slightly more of the play than Spurs, there was always a fear that the pace of Gordon Durie might snatch a goal on the break

He hit the bar in the first half and missed a golden opportunity in the last minute when the Town were caught stretched. He shot well wide with only Mervyn Day to beat.

The Town were not allowed to play their football, and without Scott Oakes had little flair down the flanks.

Long before the end both managers were saying the same thing to themselves: "I would like to win, but steady on. We had better not lose."

Brian Stein and Ceri Hughes came closest for the Town, with Erik Thorstvedt rushing out smartly to deny them.

The match details

TOWN: Day; James, Peake, Dreyer, Harvey; Hughes, Kamara, Pembridge, Preece; Campbell, Stein. Subs not used: Rees, Linton.

SPURS: Thorstvedt; Fenwick, Sedgley, Mabbutt, Edinburgh; Allen, Howells, Stewart; Durie, Gray, Walsh (Bergsson, 88 mins). Other sub Houghton, not used.

GOAL ATTEMPTS: Town five saved and three wide; Spurs two saved, four wide, one hit the bar. Corners 10-3 to Spurs.

REFEREE: Bob Hamer, Bristol.

BOOKED: Brian Stein, dissent.

ATTENDANCE: 11,494, third highest of the season at Kenilworth Road.

ENTERTAINMENT: Dismal, with Spurs the happier side to settle for a point from their eighth consecutive game without a win.

All working for the team

HAVING GIVEN his opinion that the Town's football was much too good for the Second Division, Everton boss Howard Kendall admitted that his fans had been frustrated with some reason.

Out of the cups, and with the league title out of reach, the Goodison Park customers turn up to be entertained, hoping to see Everton outplay the visitors.

Not so pleased

And they are not so pleased when so much of the entertaining football is played by the other side.

"They come to see the ball in the back of the net I don't know how many times," said Kendall, the manager who led Everton to two league titles in his first spell in charge.

"But it's not as easy as that. They like to see the other side dominated for 90 minutes, which we couldn't do.

"I saw Luton play Tottenham, and Spurs couldn't break them down. David Pleat is doing a magnificent job. They pass the ball well, and made us frustrated in the first half.

"We changed things in the second, but I have no complaints about the result."

David Pleat was well pleased with the Town's bright start, but said they then needed the cushion of a second goal to enable them to relax.

"I would like to see that because I think then they would really play.

"The wonderful thing was that we survived the difficult period at the start of the second and played well again.

"When we were one up at half-time the onus was on Everton, a big club against Luton Town, to do something about it.

"Having seen the other team get the equaliser we didn't succomb."

He added: "We knew Everton would change their tactics at half-time because we had dominated for so long. It was just a little bit of pace we lacked.

"We rely on Chris Kamara and Mark Pembridge to get forward on runs and both do that well.

"But the whole team worked hard for Luton Town, and whatever happens this season we know we have got something worthwhile to build on for the future."

Managers' viewpoints