

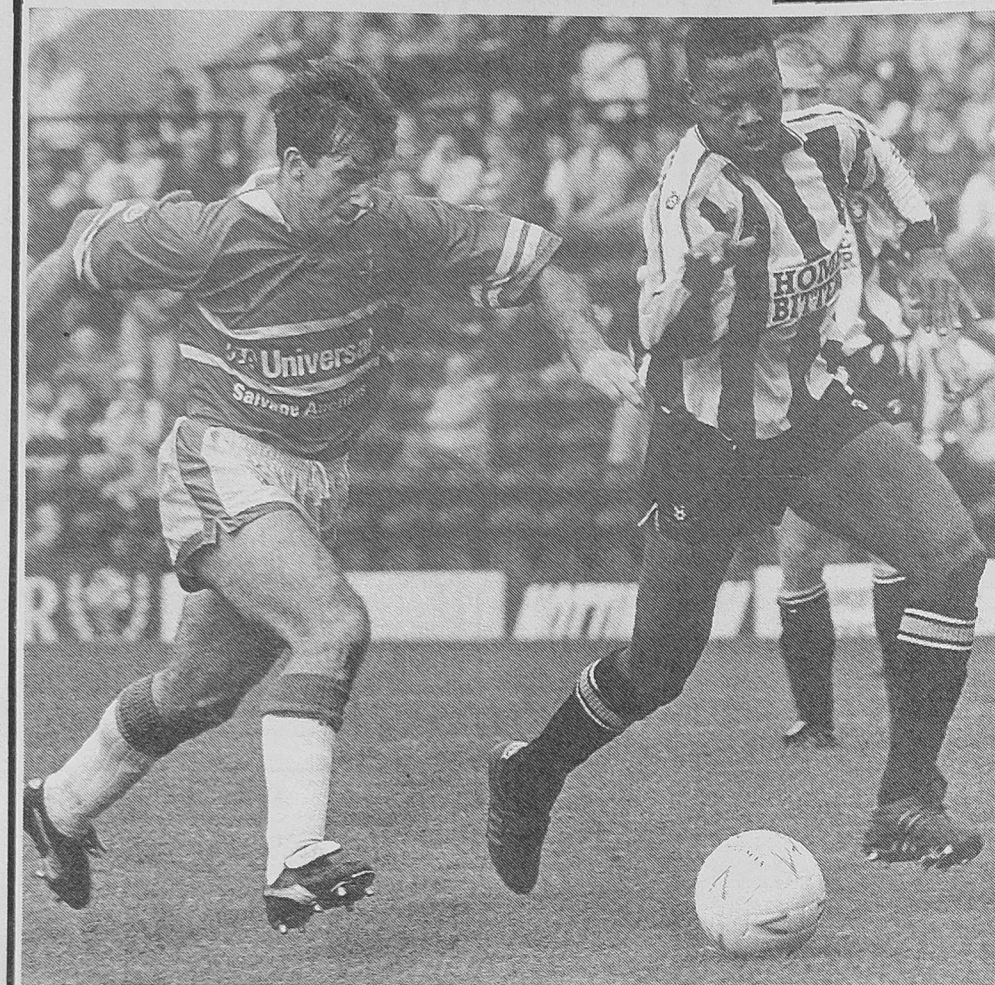
Sports News

TOWN MATCH VERDICT

Notts County..0
Luton Town....0

Brian Swain reports from Meadow Lane, Nottingham
Action pictures by Josh Levy

FORCED TO FIGHT FOR SURVIVAL



● ON THE BALL: Phil Gray, who with Steve Claridge was a constant threat to County, takes on his man.

The Coca-Cola Cup

PLAYER-MANAGER Peter Shilton fancies Plymouth's chances of completing a Coca-Cola Cup humiliation of Luton Town at Home Park on Tuesday.

The injuries sustained by Trevor Peake and Marvin Johnson, which could keep them out of football for at least month, added to the Town's discomfort.

Fighters

Shilton's Second Division fighters may have been slightly less skilful than the Town, but as a team they got everything just about right.

A late header by Steve Claridge, his second goal of the game, rescued a team that played in fits and starts, never finding the fluency and consistency that had been seen in previous games.

Plymouth worked hard, and got their reward. Shilton said: "I am quite satisfied with the result. But we could have gone home with a win, and I think we

Luton Town 2 Plymouth 2

deserved to. "We were awful in the first 15 minutes and in the last 15, but in between we were very good. We threw it away at the end.

"But hopefully, with our fans behind us, we can now get through to the next round."

Plymouth had two coach-loads in the second-lowest Kenilworth Road attendance since the visit by Workington in Division Three in 1965.

Match details

TOWN: Petterson; Linton, Salton, Peake (Rees 71 mins), Johnson (Campbell 60 mins), Oakes, James, Kamara, Preece; Claridge, Gray.

ARGYLE: Shilton; Poole, Hill, Morrison, Morgan; Skinner, Joyce, Edworthy, McCall; Nugent, Regis. Subs: Adcock, Barlow, not used.

GOALS: Steve Claridge twice for the Town, low drive in the tenth

minute after David Preece's shot had been charged down, and 80th-minute headed equaliser from a right wing cross by Des Linton; David Regis twice for Plymouth, capitalising on his pace to reach a through-ball from Warren Joyce in the 49th minute, and putting Argyle ahead in the 75th minute from a cross by Kevin Nugent after a mistake by Julian James after he had switched to left back.

OTHER ATTEMPTS: Town five saved, six wide and one by defender Andy Morrison hit the top of the bar when it might have been an own goal. Plymouth five saved and four wide. Corners: 11-3 to the Town.

REFEREE: Alan Gunn, Sussex; one of the best, and looked it.

BOOKED: No-one.

ATTENDANCE: 3,702: lowest first team game since 3,374 for the visit of Orient in the Milk Cup in September 1984, which was the smallest gate since 1965.

ENTERTAINMENT: Nowhere near recent standards, and while Town injuries may have helped them enormously Plymouth deserved their draw.

YOU could tell how things have changed in today's climate when a Luton Town team came home rightly pleased at battling to earn an away point.

Sadly, battle, fight and survive were the main demands at Meadow Lane as two teams relegated last season scrapped for self-respect.

It did not make for much pretty football, but with the Town without two more men, skipper Trevor Peake and fellow defender Marvin Johnson, it was a case of buckling down to do a difficult job.

Pass

The game cried out for someone to slow

things down, hold and pass, and show a little patience.

At least the Town tried. County, whacked 6-0 in their previous league game, at Millwall, were having none of that.

Their crowd seemed to enjoy the sight of the ball being launched hard and hopefully at every opportunity, with the midfield apparently an area to be left for grass to grow undisturbed.

They played a pressure game, without having attackers good enough to embarrass the hard-working reshuffled Town defence.

Recall

There was a recall for John Dreyer in central defence, and Julian James switched from midfield to left back.

Loan signing Damien

centre of midfield, and was unlucky to make a Luton debut against a stiff and bang side.

Considering he had met his teammates only 24 hours earlier he did well, but it was a day when even David Preece found it difficult to make class tell, and for all the effort Jason Rees made to get involved the lack of balance in midfield removed some of the Town's attacking threat.

I thought Dreyer looked better than he had done just before he was dropped and Darren Salton continued to look real class.

County boss Neil Warnock, seeing his side unable to rattle a defiant defence, took off lanky Steve Slawson for the last 20 minutes, and sent on Paul Devlin, to try his luck with the ball at his feet after a succession of high crosses had got nowhere.

Justice

The neutrals thought justice was done when the Town failed to breach County's ill-man defensive wall.

The indirect free kick was from the six-yard

line. County put every man on the goal line, between the posts, with Cherry slightly ahead and in the middle.

Chris Kamara backed the ball, and Cherry sprang forward and blocked the rising drive by Rees.

Luck went the other way when Mark Draper, who was not too keen on the play, played in a swirling 10th-minute corner.

Petterson punched weakly under pressure and Don O'Riordan, up for the set piece, thumped a header

He and Phil Gray were not given good consistent service, but the Town did create chances, and Gray had no luck with his finishing.

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