

Sports News

TOWN MATCH VERDICT

Luton Town.....2
Southend Utd....2
(Half-time.....2-0)

Brian Swain reports.

Action pictures: Josh Levy

TWO-GOAL LEAD THROWN AWAY

THE football was so awful the fans didn't even bother to stay behind to stage the usual demo against the board as Luton Town slumped at home again.

Southend United, one of only two teams below them in the First Division, gave the Town a two-goal start and then found it all too easy to pull it back in the second half.

● **BLACK SPOT:** Paul Telfer, after barely ten minutes of his first home match in nine months after injury, is on the sidelines again. Physio Brian Owen and club doctor Bill Berry start treatment for an Achilles tendon strain which ended his comeback, but which he hopes to resume on Saturday against Grimsby.

It transpired that at half-time, despite being two down, they drank their tea comfortably in the knowledge that they were doing enough to

get at least a point. In the end the Town were lucky that the Shrimpers did not mark their first visit in 25 years by netting all three.

With nearly a third of the season gone the Town are the only side in the Football League without a single home win to their name, after six attempts.

Ten home wins in 27 league starts is now the record since David Pleat became manager for the second time.

A slough of despond beckons, and did so even though the Town went in with a two-goal lead at the interval.

Generous

They had not looked at half-time, despite a generous Southend defence that stood off to allow Julian James to surge through and crack his second goal of the season with only nine minutes played.

A lovely strike by Phil Gray in the 31st minute ought to have set up the victory to spark a rise up the table.

Instead, Southend had more of the play, created far more chances, and let the Town off the hook. Steve Tilson wasted three opportunities before the interval as the Town defence lost its shape despite the return of skipper Trevor Peake.

Fullbacks Des Linton and Marvin Johnson looked good when they went forward, but were less impressive in their defending.

Peake and Darren Salton contained the high ball threat, but Ian Benjamin had the last laugh with a quick turn and lay-off in the box to set up the late equaliser for sub Kevin O'Callaghan.

Both sides had to use substitutes because of injuries, and

O'Callaghan had far more impact than Scott Oakes, who replaced Paul Telfer.

Telfer was playing his first home game in nine months after a fractured bone in his foot, and his second comeback lasted only ten minutes.

He strained an Achilles tendon just before the Town took the lead, and tried in vain to keep going.

The Town midfield was a weird mixture, with occasional bright promise eventually vanishing into a sea of mediocrity.

James battled away well, but Chris Kamara was out of touch and David Preece could not produce the consistent attacking threat we have come to expect from him.

Denied

With very little in the way of quality service, Gray and Steve Claridge were workers without much inspiration, although we ought not to forget that Gray was denied a late winner by a marvellous save from Paul Sansome.

If that had gone in we might well have gone home feeling much more optimistic about the Town's chances of climbing clear out of the relegation zone.

Perhaps the harsh truth is that both sides were exactly what their places in the league table, 22nd and 23rd, suggested.

Southend had more of the play without a hint of Premier League finishing ability.

In one of his pre-match interviews David Pleat looked at the end of the fixture list and commented on how awful it would be if he and his former assistant Colin Murphy met on the final day trying to

condemn each other to relegation.

It won't happen if the fans have their way, while Town supporters want to see David Kohler removed, the visiting fans spent much of the game chanting for Murphy's head.

He had more reason than his old boss to be pleased with what he saw on Saturday.

The Town were two very good goals.

James and Gray combined for the first, with James powering forward to shoot low into the net. Kamara's deep cross from the right set up the second. On the far angle of the penalty area, Gray hit a sweet shot, which dived goalkeeper Paul Sansome.

He stood transfixed, believing the shot was going well off target.

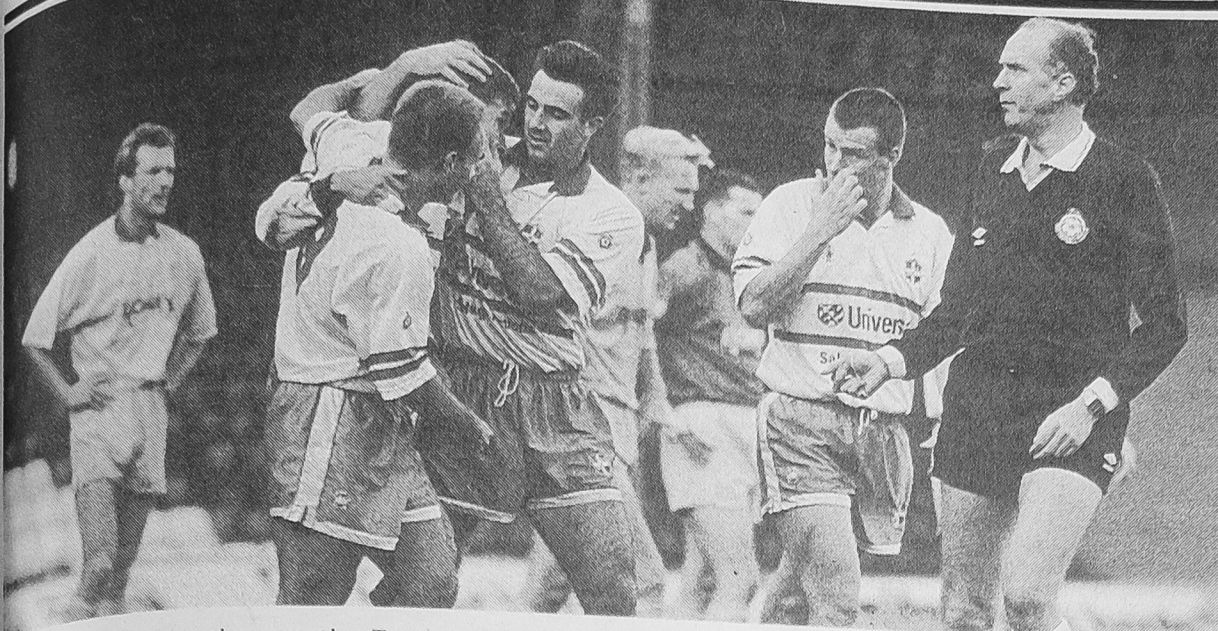
But despite their lead, the Town were regularly opening up at the back, and luckless Steve Tilson wasted enough chances to have put Southend ahead by the interval.

Finishing

The Sunday newspapermen who award merit marks for each player had no idea of how to judge Andy Petterson, because neither Southend goal was down to him, and their other finishing put him under very little pressure.

A turning point came early in the second half. Southend started the game without their best striker, Brett Angell, who is injured, and two minutes after the break their other main man, Andy Ansah, took a knock-out blow on the head in a scramble on the edge of the penalty area.

He was stretched away to hospital, but



● **CELEBRATION:** Julian James takes the plaudits for his goal.

Managers' viewpoints

COLIN Murphy was the happier of the managers on his first return to Kenilworth Road.

The former assistant to David Pleat has been under fire from Southend fans as the team has struggled to make an impact on the First Division following his appointment last summer.

Supporters who came to Luton spent much of the match calling for Murphy to be sacked and chanting the name of David Webb, who left last spring.

"We are playing in a difficult environment," said Mr. Murphy. "At times it feels like your supporters are against you."

But criticism never really hurts unless you know the people having a go are right."

Like the Town, Southend went into the game with only two wins behind them, but their manager said he thought the quality of Southend's football was good enough to see them through.

At half-time he had not been tempted to blast his men, despite the Town's two-goal lead.

"I told them that they had had more of the play and created more chances than Luton, and that if they kept it going more opportunities to score would be created."

"They were, and I thought we deserved the draw at the very least."

And he was not too critical about his keeper, Paul Sansome, who stood and watched Phil Gray's drive hit the top corner to put the Town two up.

"It was a wonderful

strike," he said. "The keeper thought it was going wide, but it dipped dramatically."

For David Pleat, the Town's goals were highlights that, he said, ought not to be forgotten on a day when so much of the Town's display had been a huge disappointment.

He kept his men in the dressing room for nearly an hour after the game to express his annoyance at the team display.

At one stage, in the second half, he had jumped out of the dug-out and demonstrated a theatrical side-footed kicking motion.

"I wanted them to pass the ball," he explained. "I can tolerate a bad performance when we try to play."

"But no-one did themselves justice. And if you don't, how can you expect to get a result?"

He complained that the Town had looked as though they were drugged at times, and had not hounded Southend enough to stop them working the ball into good attacking positions.

THE FULL MATCH DETAILS

LUTON TOWN: Petterson; Linton, Salton, Peake, Johnson; Telfer (Oakes 72mins), James, Kamara, Preece; Claridge, Gray. Other sub: Dreyer.

SOUTHEND UNITED: Sansome; Parkinson, Edwards, Prior, Powell; Locke, Cornwell, Martin, Tilson (Scully 80 mins); Ansah (O'Callaghan 47 mins); Benjamin.

THE GOALS: Julian James for the Town, shot after a surging run from deep after exchanging midfield passes with Phil Gray in the ninth minute; Gray 31 minutes, dipping 20-yarder into the top corner from a cross by Chris Kamara; overlapping fullback Chris Powell for Southend, 60th minute, from a poor clearance header by Des Linton; Kevin O'Callaghan for Southend, 85th minute, set up in the box by Ian Benjamin's neat turn and pass.

OTHER STRIKES: Town 7-7; Southend 7-7. REFEREE: Terry Holbrook. Staffordshire. Spoiled a good performance by sometimes treating players like naughty children.

BOOKED: Steve Claridge for a foul on Andy Edwards.

ATTENDANCE: 7,256, second lowest of the season.

ENTERTAINMENT: Depressing, with the Town fortunate to be two up at the interval and then being inept enough to throw it away and leave them the only team in the Football League without a home win this season.



● **OPENER:** Julian James is outnumbered, but through to put the Town into an early lead.

Local soccer tables

Campri South Midlands League

PREMIER DIVISION						RESERVE DIVISION ONE								
	P	W	D	L	F A P		P	W	D	L	F A P			
Oxford City	13	9	3	1	36	15	15	9	5	1	48	20	32	
Arlesey Town	15	9	3	3	38	21	30	15	9	3	1	23	9	30
Wingate	14	8	5	1	34	14	29	14	8	4	2	39	15	28
Hatfield Town	16	8	5	3	46	26	29	14	8	3	3	29	17	27
Potters Bar Town	15	8	5	2	34	22	29	15	8	4	3	23	26	22
Brache Sparta	14	8	3	3	28	16	29	14	5	6	3	29	22	21
Biggleswade Town	16	8	3	5	36	17	27	10	6	2	2	21	16	20
Hoddesdon Town	14	8	3	3	29	18	27	14	6	2	6	25	25	20
MK Borough	13	7	2	4	25	14	23	10	5	3	2	20	11	18
Harpden Town	16	7	2	7	23	17	23	13	6	3	4	31	22	18
Welwyn GC	13	6	5	5	15	19	23	14	4	5	3	27	11	17
Letchworth GC	13	6	3	4	22	13	21	10	5	2	3	20	16	17
Shillington	15	5	4	6	20	22	19	11	4	4	3	12	20	15
Totternhoe	14	4	5	5	22	21	17	11	4	3	4	20	19	15
Leverstock Green	13	2	7	17	21	14	14	14	2	8	18	18	12	18
Luton Old Boys	15	4	1	10	15	29	13	6	1	3	8	21	26	12
Buckingham Athletic	16	3	3	10	20	35	12	13	3	1	9	20	37	10
61FC Luton	14	3	3	8	18	42	12	12	2	3	7	15	33	9
Pittone	14	2	4	12	49	12	12	12	1	5	6	15	24	8
Langford	13	2	5	6	18	30	11	13	1	5	7	20	32	8
Pirton	16	2	2	10	14	35	8	12	2	8	13	37	8	8
New Bradwell	11	0	2	9	8	34	2	12	1	4	7	15	24	7

Three points deducted.

DIVISION ONE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	P
Bedford Town	16	14	2	0	54	15	44
London Colney	13	11	1	1	41	10	34
Bedford United	15	10	3	2	50	20	33
Shenley & Loughton	15	10	2	3	42	21	32
Risborough Rangers	15	9	5	1	29	14	32
Potters Bar Cru	17	8	1	8	37	34	25
Shelford Town	16	7	3	6	31	24	24
Winslow United	13	7	2	4	39	25	23
Tring Ath.	17	6	5	6	27	33	23
Toddington Rovers	14	6	4	4	33	23	22
Caddington	12	7	0	5	29	20	21
Ashcroft	17	6	3	8	31	36	17
Amphill Town	16	5	4	7	25	28	19
Flemstead	15	4	5	6	25	38	17
Cranfield United	15	4	3	8	25	27	15
Sandy Albion	14	3	7	23	31	15	15
De Havilland	15	4	4	7	23	33	13
Stony Stratford	13	3	3	7	18	28	12
Delco	13	3	2	8	17	35	11
Embsay	16	3	1	12	20	55	10
Walden Rgrs	14	2	1	11	13	51	7
Ickleford	13	0	1	12	10	48	1

Three points deducted.

RESERVE DIVISION TWO

	P	W	D	L	F	A
*Oxford City	10	9	1	0	33	10
Shenley	9	7	1	1	27	13
Bedford United	9	6	1	2	29	14
Cranfield	8	6	0	2	17	7
Flemstead	9	6	0	3	20	14
Tring Ath.	10	4	3	3	17	15
Ashcroft	8	4	2	3	17	10
Risborough	12	4	2	6	25	20
Winslow United	7	4	1	2	16	12
Delco	10	3	3	4	27	26
Stony Stratford	8	4	0	4	13	14
Caddington	7	2	3	2	14	11
Amphill Town	11	3	0	8	14	36
*De Havilland	10	3	2	5	19	21
Potters Bar Cru	11	2	1	8	21	36
Walden Rgrs	9	2	0	7	10	26
Sandy Alb	10	0	4	6	13	27
Ickleford	6	1	0	5	7	26

Three points deducted.

A & B Sports NHC Sunday League

PREMIER DIVISION						DIVISION FOUR									
	P	W	D	L	F A P		P	W	D	L	F A P				
St. Joseph's	5	4	0	1	14	5	8	Britannia Airways	5	2	3	0	9	5	7
Sacred Heart	5	3	1	0	6	2	8	Caddington Res	4	2	2	0	11	6	8
Enterprise	6	3	1	2	15	13	7	Marple	4	3	1	0	15	10	6
Brache Green Man	5	3	0	2	12	8	6	Black Swan	5	3	0	2	10	13	6
AFC Heron	5	3	0	2	11	8	6	Silsoe Rangers	4	2	1	1	21	10	5
LW Totternhoe	4	2	1	1	11	7	5	Checkout	6	2	1	3	12	11	5
FC Coral	4	2	1	1	10	5	5	Magnum	3	2	0	1	5	7	4
Crawley Sports	5	2	1	2	6	10	5	Cavallier	3	1	2	3	7	11	4
Celtic Supporters	5	2	1	2	6	8	4	Lewsey Res	4	1	1	2	8	15	3
THSS	5	1	1	3	11	16	3	Laporte	3	0	2	1	7	8	2
Stag Sports	3	0	2	7	12	31	7	AFC Stopley	6	1	0	5	8	19	2
Limbury Black Swan	5	0	0	5	10	22	0								

DIVISION ONE						DIVISION FIVE									
	P	W	D	L	F A P		P	W	D	L	F A P				
Sacred Heart Res	6	3	3	0	16	6	9	Roman Legion	5	5	0	0	30	2	1
St. Joseph's Res	4	1	0	12	5	7	4	AFC Oakley	5	3	2	0	19	6	7
Stopley Harriers	5	2	2	1	10	12	5	Flint United	4	3	1	0	23	3	3
Horsehoe Saints	6	2	2	2	10	8	6	Barbarians	6	3	1	2	15	11	5
GIS Leagrave	4	2	1	1	8	8	5	Wells Star	2	2	1	0	15	11	4
Crawley Sports Res	3	1	2	0	8	7	4	Casa Bianca (61)	5	2	1	2	12	8	5
Stopley WMC	4	1	2	1	5	7	4	Crescent Social	3	1	1	1	3	3	3
Celtic Res	4	1	1	2	7	8	3	Lea Sports Res	3	1	1	1	5	7	3
Hexton	4	1	2	1	5	12	3	Kenilworth Rangers	6	1	1	4	6	15	9
Vauxhall Hightown	4	0	1	3	3	21	1	Stratley Chicks	6	1	0	5	12	15	3
Lewsey	4	0	0	4	4	14	0	Borough Arms Res	4	1	0	3	5	12	2
								Luton BR	5	0	1	4	3	33	3

DIVISION TWO						DIVISION SIX									
	P	W	D	L	F A P		P	W	D	L	F A P				
Lilley Rangers	5	3	2	0	15	9	8	Wigmore Ath	4	5	0	0	35	6	1
Caddington	5	3	2	0	15	11	8	Thames United	4	4	0	0	20	4	1
The Swan	4	3	0	1	8	5	6	White Swan	5	3	0	2	22	14	4
LW Totternhoe Res	4	2	1	0	9	7	5	Haddington	6	3	0	3	13	9	6
AFC Heron Res	5	2	1	2	10	6	5	HF7 Chicks	7	2	2	3	13	23	6
Boater	4	2	0	2	6	5	4	FC Houghton Res	3	2	0	3	12	13	3
AFC Wigram	4	2	0	2	9	9	4	Lewsey Park Soc	3	2	0	0	6	7	4
Brewery	6	1	2	3	10	15	4	Fides	5	3	0	3	12	13	3
Valley Sports	4	0	3	6	7	9	2	Luton YS	3	1	0	2	4	13	2
Lea Sports	4	0	2	2	7	11	2	Rileys	5	1	0	5	5	32	2
Borough Arms	4	0	0	4	4	15	0	Renault Dodge Res	3	0	1	2	2	2	2
								Red Star Res	2	0	0	2	1	6	0

DIVISION THREE						DIVISION SEVEN									
	P	W	D	L	F A P		P	W	D	L	F A P				
Stopley Harriers R	7	5	1	1	28	16	11	Old Mount Rangers	5	5	0	0	20	2	1
FC Houghton	6	4	0	0	17	8	5	Manor Rangers	5	4	1	0	17	7	2
Renault Dodge	7	4	0	2	22	10	8	Romulus	6	3	1	2	15	11	7
NT Sugar Loaf	5	4	0	1	13	7	8	Limbury United	5	3	1	1	18	14	2
Dog and Duck	7	4	0	3	21	15	8	Marple & Luton	6	3	0	4	22	3	3
Old Mount House	5	3	0	2	18	7	6	Marykate Res	6	3	0	3	19	16	6
Coulter	5	3	0	2	12	15	6	Red Lion	5	2	0	3	11	15	4
FC Coral Res	4	2	0	2	9	8	4	The Harrow	5	2	0	3	12	18	4
Stopley WMC Res	7	2	0	5	11	24	4	Potels	3	1	1	1	4	3	3
2 Star	2	2	0	0	1	5	1	Luton Rover	5	1	0	4	5	17	2
GIS Leagrave Res	6	0	1	6	9	3	2	Luton Thameslink	5	0	0	8	4	17	2
Strawpellers	6	0	0	6	7	25	0	Kenilworth Rgkrs Res	6	0	0	6	8	31	3

DIVISION ONE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	P
Sacred Heart Res	6	3	3	0	16	6	9
St. Joseph's Res	4	3	1	0	12	5	7
Stopsley Harriers	5	2	2	1	25	9	6
Horseshoe Saints	6	2	2	2	10	8	6
GIS Leagrave	4	2	1	1	8	8	5
Crawley Sports Res	3	1	2	0	8	7	4
Stopsley WMC	4	1	2	1	5	5	4
Celtic Res	4	1	1	2	7	8	3
Hexton	4	1	1	2	5	12	3
Vauxhall Hightown	4	0	1	3	3	21	1
Lewsey	4	0	0	4	4	14	0